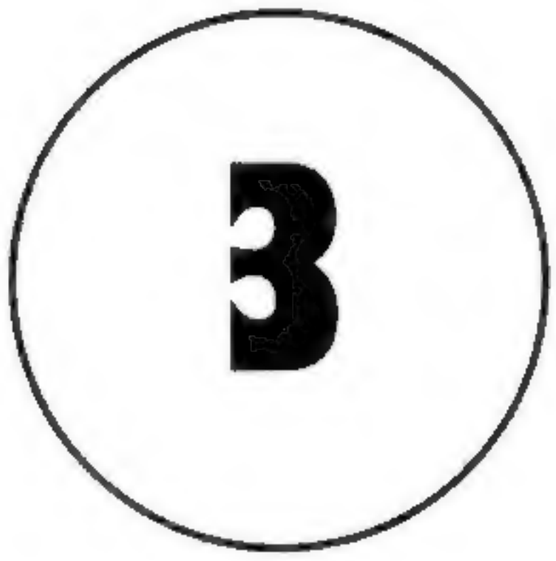
3
MATURE CONTENT
SUZUKA
KOUJI SEO

SUZUKA



Kouji Seo

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED BY
David Ury

LETTERED BY
Janice Chiang

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A Note from the Author

Everybody knows that I'm a huge fan of the Hiroshima Carp. My dream is to someday put a big Suzuka sign up in Hiroshima Stadium and have one of the Carp players hit a home run right into it. I hope the Carp are winning when this book comes out.

SUZUKA

3

Kouji Seo

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

YAMATO AKITSUKI

SUZUKA ASAHINA

YASUNOBU HATTORI

HONOKA SAKURAI

SOUICHI MIYAMOTO

MIKI HASHIBA

YUUKA SAOTOME

MEGUMI MATSUMOTO

THE STORY SO FAR

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD YAMATO AKITSUKI MOVES TO TOKYO HOPING THAT TRANSFERRING INTO A HIGH SCHOOL THERE WILL CHANGE HIS LIFE FOR THE BETTER. ONCE IN TOKYO, YAMATO MOVES INTO A GIRLS-ONLY APARTMENT COMPLEX/ BATHHOUSE RUN BY HIS AUNT. ONE DAY YAMATO COMES ACROSS A GORGEOUS GIRL AT HIS SCHOOL. HE IS SHOCKED WHEN HE LEARNS THAT THIS BEAUTIFUL GIRL, SUZUKA ASAHINA, LIVES IN THE ROOM RIGHT NEXT TO HIS. ON TOP OF THAT, SHE'S EVEN IN HIS CLASS. . . . YAMATO AKITSUKI'S ONCE-DULL LIFE IS FINALLY STARTING TO CHANGE.

SUZUKA

#14 Departure

BLOOP

HEY!

HEY, YAMATO-KUN! THE WATER'S LUKEWARM!

BEEP

ANSWER ME, YAMATO!

BEEP

……

キーン DING

コーン DONG

WOO

WOO

.....

...STARTING TO FALL IN LOVE...

MAYBE I AM...

MAYBE WE CAN CATCH THE PARADE.

COME ON!

THERE'S NO GOING BACK NOW.

I ALREADY TOLD HER I LOVE HER.

WHY DID I SAY THAT?

WAS IT BECAUSE SHE HUGGED ME THAT TIME?

I MUST'VE TOTALLY MISINTERPRETED EVERYTHING.

I'M SUCH AN IDIOT.

HEY.

WAS IT BECAUSE SHE LET ME TAKE HER TO THE THEME PARK?

WOO

WOO

.....

YASU-NOBU.

ARE YOU GOING HOME OR WHAT?

QUIT SPACIN OUT.

.....

I'M GOING TO A GOKON DATING PARTY, AND WE'RE ONE GUY SHORT.

HOW ABOUT COMING ALONG?

SORRY.

THIS COULD BE YOUR CHANCE TO HOOK UP WITH—

OKAY?

DON'T WORRY. THERE WON'T BE ANY UGLY CHICKS.

NO THANKS.

.....

OKAY...

I KNOW TONS OF CUTE GIRLS.

WELL, LET ME KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

OH.

.....

I CAN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT OTHER GIRLS RIGHT NOW.

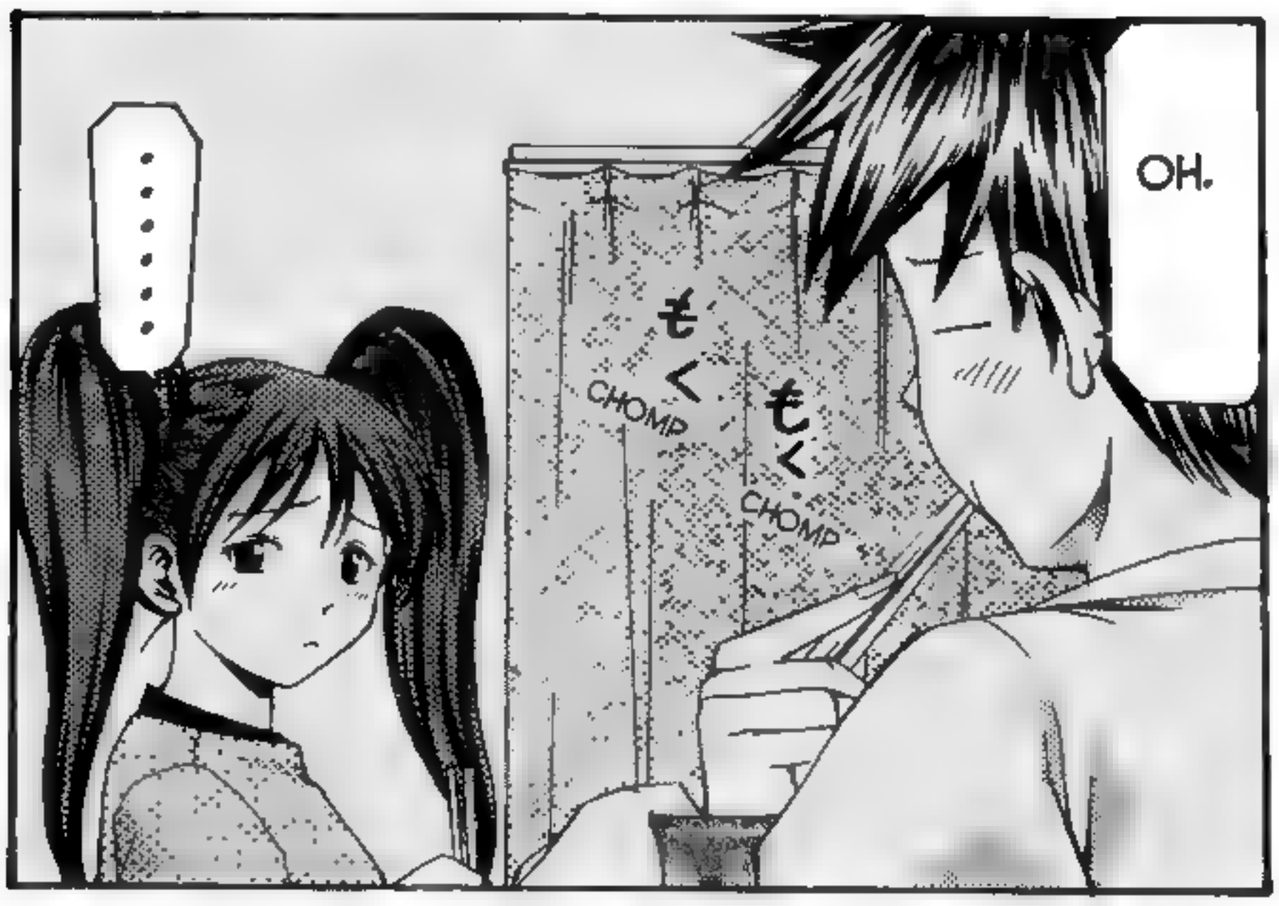
I JUST GOT MY HEART BROKEN YESTERDAY...

NOW WHERE AM I GONNA FIND ANOTHER GUY?

IT'S NICE OF HIM TO TRY TO CHEER ME UP, BUT...

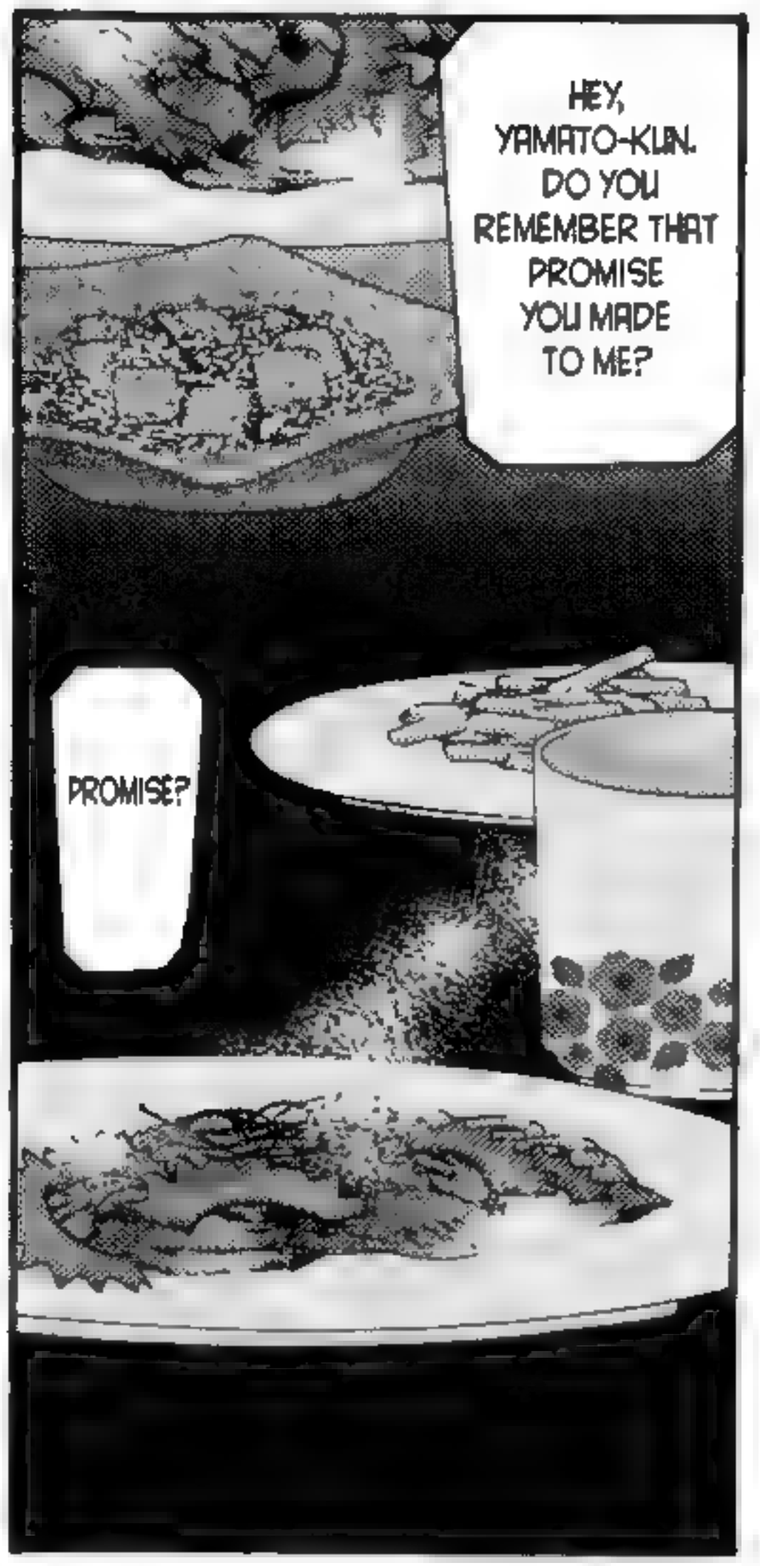
ちらっ...

GLANCE


OH.
もくもく
CHOMP
CHOMP

SHE HAD DINNER WITH HER FRIENDS ON THE WAY HOME FROM PRACTICE.
HEY, AYANO-SAN... WHERE'S ASAHINA?

YOU PROMISED TO MARRY ME WHEN I'M ALL GROWN UP!


HEY, YAMATO-KUN. DO YOU REMEMBER THAT PROMISE YOU MADE TO ME?
PROMISE?

I JUST REMEMBERED IT, THAT'S ALL.
WHY ARE YOU BRINGING THAT UP?

I THINK SHE TRICKED ME INTO MAKING THAT PROMISE.

OH YEAH...

HEE HEE

YOU USED TO TALK ABOUT MARRYING YAMATO-KUN ALL THE TIME BACK WHEN YOU WERE IN KINDERGARTEN, MIHO.

OH YEAH, I REMEMBER THAT.

EVEN IF NO ONE ELSE WILL GO OUT WITH YOU, I'LL STILL MARRY YOU.

DON'T WORRY, YAMATO-KUN!

EVEN LITTLE MIHO-CHAN IS TRYING TO CHEER ME UP. HOW PATHETIC.

I WANT A SILK WEDDING DRESS COVERED IN JEWELS.

WHATEVER.

HA, HA... THANKS.

SHE MUST KNOW I GOT SHOT DOWN BY ASAHINA.

I GUESS THIS ISN'T ANY EASIER FOR HER...

IS ASAHINA JUST GONNA KEEP SKIPPING MEALS?

カシ

CLOP

ASAHINA

AH...

ASAHINA...

AH...

...MAN...

SHE CAN'T EVEN TALK TO ME.

...

SLAM

I'M GOING TO BED.

I FEEL LIKE I'M GONNA START BAWLING AGAIN.

!

DONG DONG

CLICK

D-DON'T WORRY... I'M NOT UPSET OR ANYTHING...

COULD THAT BE ASAHINA?

HELLO!

YOUR FAVORITE ESCORTS HAVE ARRIVED!

♡

HIC

WAS GETTING SHOT DOWN...

SOMEONE'S IN A BAD MOOD.

WHA—

GO HOME.

...BY SUZUKA-CHAN REALLY SUCH A SHOCK?

WAH!

SHIVER

YOU ARE THE DEVIL.

SO WE JUST CAME BY TO GET A GOOD LOOK AT THAT FACE OF YOURS.

HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?

IT'S WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE.

HUH?

YOU GOT SHOT DOWN, YAMATO-KUN? YOU POOR THING.

HIC

HUH?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, MEGUMI-SAN?

SO THAT'S HOW IT IS...

GLARE

WELL, THEN...

SWIP

YOU CAN GIVE THEM A LITTLE SQUEEZE, BUT JUST THIS ONCE.

WAH!

SMACK

ONCE YOU'RE TIRED OF MY BOOBS, YOU JUST THROW ME AWAY LIKE A PIECE OF TRASH?

WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?

ALL RIGHT! LET'S GET OUR DRINK ON!

YOU MEN ARE ALL THE SAME!

SNURFFLE... SNORT

Z Z Z Z Z Z

HOW LAME!

YOU ALREADY FELL ASLEEP, MEGUMI?

HUH?

WOO

WOO

I'D TURN YOU DOWN, TOO.

YOU'RE ALL TALK AND NO ACTION.

7" STAB

STAB

YOU NEED TO START ACTING LIKE A MAN.

YOU KNOW, THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A "NICE GUY" AND A "WISHY-WASHY WUSS."

7" THWUNK

ARE YOU JUST GONNA SIT THERE FEELING SORRY FOR YOURSELF?

DON'T BE SUCH A PUSSY.

SHUT UP.

URRMPH...

WAH!

RATTLE

GOD, I CAN'T STAND PATHETIC GUYS WHO WALLOW IN THEIR OWN MISERY.

I'M GONNA DRINK OUTSIDE.

KYA!

SLIP

Y-YOU IDIOT! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

WE'RE ON THE SECOND FLOOR!

FWOOSH

AH!

WOULD YOU JUST...

...STOP ACTING LIKE A LITTLE KID?

HEH, HEH. DID I SCARE YOU?

OH, BROTHER...

WHY DON'T YOU COME OUT HERE WITH ME AND COOL OFF?

HAND ME SOME SAKE.

NOTHING BEATS DRINKING SAKE IN THE FRESH AIR!

AHH!

...TOLD HER HOW I FELT.

I NEVER SHOULD'VE...

YOU'RE SO LUCKY, YUUKA-SAN. YOU'RE ALWAYS IN A GOOD MOOD.

...WATCHING SUZUKA-CHAN GO OUT WITH THE OTHER GUYS WITHOUT EVER TELLING HER HOW YOU FELT?

OH REALLY?

SO YOU'D RATHER HAVE JUST SAT THERE...

HUH?

ACTUALLY...

THAT SOUNDS EVEN WORSE.

.....

……

SWIG

HUH?

IT'S JUST LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

HMM...

I GOT SHOT DOWN JUST LIKE YOU DID. HE TOLD ME I WAS TOO PLAIN-LOOKING.

ふは！

AHH

WHEN I WAS A FRESHMAN IN HIGH SCHOOL, I HAD A HUGE CRUSH ON THIS OLDER GUY.

パカッ

FLIP

P506i

H-HUH?

PLAIN-LOOKING? HE CALLED *YOU* PLAIN-LOOKING?

HUH?

...SHOW THIS TO EVERY-ONE.

HERE.

TAKE A LOOK. DON'T THINK I...

旭

ASAHIYU BATHS

湯

WHO'S THAT?

. . . . . .

...IT'S ME.

PS06

THAT'S WHAT I USED TO LOOK LIKE.

SWIPE

HUH?

AFTER THAT I TRIED ALL KINDS OF THINGS TO GET HIM TO LIKE ME.

I GOT PIERCINGS, I DYED MY HAIR, I WORE EXPENSIVE CLOTHES...

BUT EVERY TIME I TRIED TO TALK TO HIM, HE SHOT ME RIGHT DOWN.

ASAHIYU BATHS

SH- SHE DID LOOK KIND OF PLAIN...

I GUESS SHE WANTED TO TRY THE OTHER EX- TREME...

YOU DIDN'T GIVE UP AFTER THE FIRST TIME?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN EVERY TIME?

I'M IN LOVE WITH HIM.

HOW COULD I?

SO I TRIED TO FORGET ABOUT HIM BY DATING OTHER GUYS.

WELL, HE ENDED UP MOVING TO THE STATES FOR WORK...

BUT... YOU KNOW...

I HAD FUN, AND I DID MEET SOME REALLY NICE GUYS.

ASAHIYU BATHS

.....

I JUST CAN'T...

...FORGET HIM...

...

THE SAME THING?

SWIP

GOD, WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE ABOUT TO CRY AGAIN?

DON'T BE STUPID.

YOU DON'T SEE ME SITTING AROUND WALLOWING IN MY OWN SELF-PITY, DO YOU?

I-I'M NOT...I WAS JUST THINKING... WE KIND OF WENT THROUGH THE SAME THING.

SOMEDAY I'M GONNA FIGURE OUT HOW TO...

...MAKE HIM WANT ME!

HUH?

ASAHIYU BATHS

I'VE NEVER EVEN TOLD ANYONE ABOUT THIS BEFORE.

OOPS... I MUST BE REALLY DRUNK.

YUUKA-SAN...

I WON'T TELL ANY-ONE.

HMMM...

I'LL MAKE SURE THE WHOLE WORLD SEES THAT LITTLE MOVIE I SHOT OF YOU.

YOU'D BETTER NOT TELL A SOUL OR...

I THOUGHT I HAD TO GIVE UP ON ASAHINA.

I THOUGHT THAT ONCE YOU GOT SHOT DOWN, THAT WAS IT...

I WAS WRONG!

BUT...

HUH? HEY! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

GLUG

.....

NOW I FINALLY GET IT.

SLURP!

I THOUGHT MY LIFE MIGHT CHANGE...

...IF I MOVED TO TOKYO, AND...

FWINK

I JUST HAD A FEELING GOOD THINGS WOULD HAPPEN.

...WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL IN THE BIG CITY.

NOTHING'S GONNA HAPPEN IF I JUST SIT AROUND WAITING FOR MY LIFE TO CHANGE!

BUT...IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW FAR AWAY I MOVE...

I...

I LOVE SUZUKA ASAHINA!

AND I'M NOT GIVING UP!

I THINK HE'S FINALLY BECOME A REAL MAN.

HEH, HEH.

I CAN HEAR YOU, YOU KNOW...! GEEZ...

I...

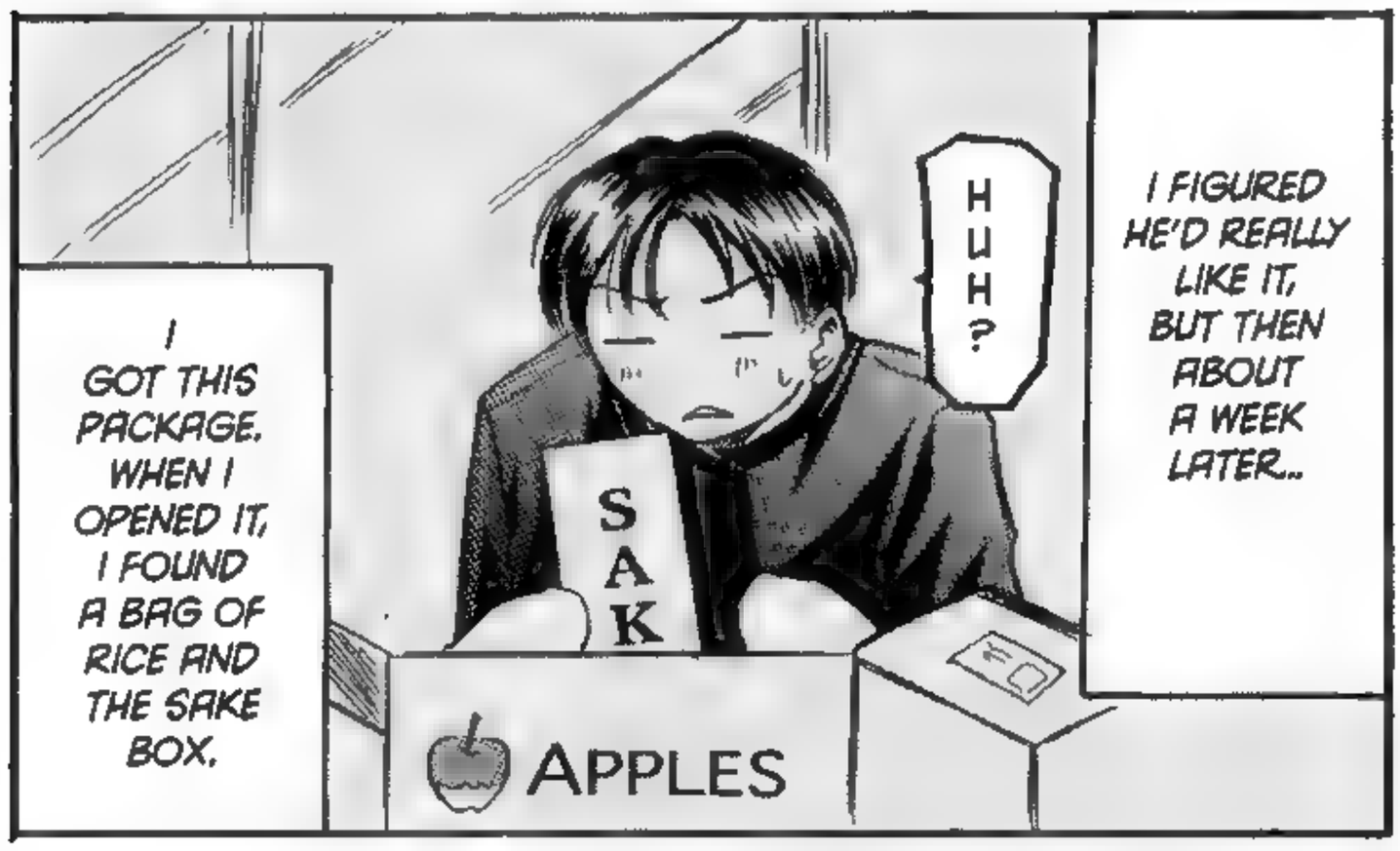
ASAHIYU BATHS

I'M GONNA DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

SHUT UP!

WOO HOO!

ENOUGH SITTING AROUND WAITING...


I GOT THIS PACKAGE. WHEN I OPENED IT, I FOUND A BAG OF RICE AND THE SAKE BOX.
HUH?
I FIGURED HE'D REALLY LIKE IT, BUT THEN ABOUT A WEEK LATER...
SAK
APPLES

SUZUKA FOUR-PANEL THEATER NUMBER NINE
TRICKED

ガチャ

CLICK

AH...

HEY.

GOOD MORNING!

SUZUKA

G-GOOD MORNING...

#15 Determination

HMM...

...YOU JUST DON'T GIVE UP, DO YOU?

YOU MUST REALLY LIKE SUZUKA-CHAN.

SO SHE'S GONNA GO OUT TO EAT WITH YOU, HUH?

YEAH, I DO.

WHOA. AND YOU'RE NOT EVEN EMBARRASSED TO TALK ABOUT IT.

I GUESS IT NEVER HURTS TO TRY.

SO WHAT'S YOUR GAME PLAN FOR TONIGHT?

YOU GONNA MOVE IN FOR THE KILL?

UH...

NOT EXACTLY. YOU SEE...

I'M GONNA JOIN THE TRACK TEAM.

HUH?

. . . . . .

AT FIRST, I THOUGHT SUZUKA-CHAN FELL FOR YOU AFTER SHE SAW HOW FAST YOU WERE BUT...

WELL...

Y-YEAH.

THE TRACK TEAM?

THIS ISN'T ABOUT HOW FAST I AM...

SLURP

NOW I JUST DON'T SEE IT.

.....

YEAH, BUT...

I JUST WANNA...

...SPEND AS MUCH TIME WITH HER AS I CAN.

AH...

FWUP

ASAHINA... I...

I OVERHEARD YOUR CONVERSATION...

SORRY...

THE WHOLE TEAM SPENDS DAY AFTER DAY AT PRACTICE TRYING TO BEAT THEIR RECORD BY AN EXTRA SECOND...OR AN EXTRA CENTIMETER.

THE TRACK TEAM ISN'T ALL FUN AND GAMES, YOU KNOW?

ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT THIS?

WELL...

I'LL PROBABLY MANAGE SOMEHOW.

DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN HANDLE IT, YAMATO-KUN?

HUH?

SO IF IT'S TOO HARD, YOU'RE JUST GONNA GIVE UP?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN PROBABLY?

IDIOT.

...YOU'RE JUST GONNA WEIGH THE TEAM DOWN.

IF YOU JOIN UP WITH THAT ATTITUDE...

...!!

OH, BROTHER.

WHAT'S SHE SO MAD ABOUT?

.....

WHA—? IT'S NOT LIKE THAT...

JUST CALM DOWN. GEEZ, MAN, YOU'RE REALLY GOING AFTER HER.

YOU'RE PRACTICALLY A STALKER.

THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY.

AH... WAIT!

HEY!

CLANK

I MEAN, THINK ABOUT IT. YOU'RE GONNA JOIN THE TEAM FOR YOUR OWN SELFISH REASONS... AND JUST KIND OF GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS.

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT FROM HER PERSPECTIVE, THERE'S NO WAY YOU BELONG ON THE TEAM.

LOOK, YOUR REASONS FOR JOINING THE TEAM ARE ALL WRONG, AND YOU'RE TREATING IT LIKE IT'S NO BIG DEAL.

SHE REALLY TAKES IT SERIOUSLY, SO I CAN TOTALLY SEE HOW IT COULD PISS HER OFF.

BUT I'M NOT...

...JUST GONNA BE GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS.

YOU'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS YOUR WHOLE LIFE...

I REALLY DON'T SEE HOW YOU COULD EVER MAKE IT ON THE TRACK TEAM.

カラン
CLINK

OH REALLY?

SORRY, BUT FROM WHERE I'M SITTING, YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE ALL TALK.

OTHERWISE, YOUR CHANCES WITH HER ARE NIL!

MAYBE SHE'LL STILL FORGIVE YOU.

YOU'D BETTER APOLOGIZE TO HER RIGHT NOW.

.....

HE SAID HE WANTED TO JOIN THE TRACK TEAM, AND SUZUKA-CHAN GOT TOTALLY PISSED OFF.

HUH? OH...

HONOKA-CHAN!

WH-WHAT'RE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?

CHANCES WITH WHO?

YOU'RE JOINING THE TRACK TEAM, AKITSUKI-KUN?

HUH?

I...I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD JOIN EITHER.

I MEAN...

R-REALLY?

I KNOW, IT'S CRAZY, RIGHT?

HE COULD NEVER HANDLE IT.

P-PICKLED RADISH?

HERE, HAVE MY PICKLED RADISH.

IF YOU JOIN THE TEAM, I'LL NEVER GET TO SPEND ANY TIME WITH YOU.

...I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.

SOUNDS LIKE I REALLY UNDERESTIMATED WHAT IT TAKES TO JOIN THE TRACK TEAM.

CRUNCH

YEAH, I'LL GO, TOO.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO HER IN CLASS. YOU CAN DO IT AFTER SCHOOL.

DON'T WORRY, I'LL COME WITH YOU.

MEETING ROOM

FWIP

FWAH

カタカタカタ CLACK

CLACK

CLACK

カチャ CLICK

HUH? YOU'RE HERE EARLY, ASAHINA.

ARE YOU FIDDLING WITH YOUR LAPTOP AGAIN, MIYAMOTO-SENPAI? YOU'RE GONNA RUIN YOUR EYES, YOU KNOW?

WHOA. THIS IS LIKE THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER GOTTEN THE TIME WRONG.

WHAT? I THOUGHT WE WERE MEETING AT THREE.

SWIP

I WAS JUST DOING SOME RESEARCH ON YOUR FRIEND AKITSUKI-KUN.

ABOUT THAT RELAY HE DID IN JUNIOR HIGH WHERE HE CAME IN LAST.

. . . . . .

WHAT'RE YOU LOOKING AT?

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS. HE'S PRETTY AMAZING!

CREAK

REALLY?

200~300M	HAJIME KUDOU	16.57
300~400M	YAMATO AKITSUKI	11.33

BACK

...IN 11.33 SECONDS!

THE OTHER GUYS ON HIS TEAM WERE REALLY SLOW, BUT...

BUT HE RAN THE LAST 100 METERS...

.....

NO, I DISAGREE.

WE'VE REALLY GOTTA GET HIM ON THE TRACK TEAM.

DON'T YOU THINK?

NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT.

DID YOU GUYS HAVE A FIGHT OR SOME-THING?

OKAY...

. . . . . .

UH-HUH...

STEP

I'LL COME BACK LATER.

CLACK

CLACK

CLACK

ガチャ CLICK

ASAHINA.

AH.

...YAMATO-KUN.

AKITSUKI-KUN?

...!

HELLO.

OH GOOD, NO ONE ELSE IS HERE.

WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT'RE YOU GUYS DOING HERE?

WHAT? DID YOU FINALLY DECIDE TO JOIN THE TEAM?

UH UM... WELL...

UH...

OKAY.

THAT'S ENOUGH. I CAN APOLOGIZE MYSELF.

コツ!

STEP

NO, SENPAI.

THAT'S NOT WHY HE'S HERE.

.....

.....

.....

ON SECOND THOUGHT...

SWIP

HUH?

SENPAI...

SO WHAT IF I UNDERESTIMATED WHAT IT TAKES TO BE ON THE TEAM...

HUH?

YOU TALKING TO ME?

...I STILL WANNA BE BY ASAHINA'S SIDE!

SIGN ME UP FOR THE TEAM.

HUH?

...!

HUH?

SUZUKA FOUR-PANEL THEATER NUMBER TEN

THAT BOTTLE OF SAKE

CHATTER

ALL RIGHT, EVERYBODY! GATHER 'ROUND!

CHATTER

BEFORE WE START TODAY'S PRACTICE...

I WANT TO INTRODUCE A NEW MEMBER.

I NEVER THOUGHT HE'D JUST WALK IN AND SIGN UP ON HIS OWN.

YEAH, HE SURE DID.

HE REALLY DID JOIN THE TEAM.

I'M YAMATO AKITSUKI!

NICE TO MEET YOU ALL!

SUZUKA

#16 Distance

...

. . . . . .

TRACK SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT KENJI KOBAYASHI-KUN

DID YOU REALLY BEAT KOBAYA-KAWA?

CHATTER

HEH.

CHATTER...

ALL RIGHT! WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, AKITSUKI!

YOU WERE AMAZING THE OTHER DAY!

HE'S A SPRINTER.

I THINK THAT'LL BE PERFECT FOR HIM, CAPTAIN.

I'LL GIVE IT MY ALL!

THANK YOU!

ALL RIGHT! LET'S GET WARMED UP!

WE'RE GONNA START WITH A "GOLDFISH POOP" FORMATION.

ALL RIGHT! LET'S START OUT BY SPLITTING UP WITH THE GIRLS IN ONE GROUP AND THE GUYS IN TWO.

WHAT EVENT ARE YOU GONNA FOCUS ON, AKITSUKI?

UM... THE 100-METER DASH.

FWAH

FWAH

FWAH

FWAH

WELL, THE PACE IS A LITTLE FAST FOR ME, BUT I THINK I CAN KEEP UP.

OH, SO, I GUESS "GOLDFISH POOP" FORMATION JUST MEANS RUNNING IN A LINE.

. . . . . .

HAHH

WE'LL SEE.

HAHH

HAHH

HEY, MIYAMOTO-SENPAI. HOW MANY LAPS ARE WE GONNA RUN?

FWOOSH

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HUH?

WHA-?

IS THE PERSON IN THE BACK SUPPOSED TO SPRINT ALL THE WAY UP TO THE FRONT?

FWOOSH

YOU'RE NEXT, AKITSUKI-KUN.

UH, OKAY.

ARE YOU KIDDING? THERE'RE LIKE FIFTEEN GUYS AHEAD OF ME.

THEY'RE RUNNING WAY TOO FAST!

SHIT! I CAN'T CATCH UP TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE!

HAH

HAH

YOU CALL THIS A WARM-UP?

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY LAPS I DID.

I-I ENDED UP DOING TEN DASHES.

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?

WHY DOES EVERYBODY ELSE LOOK SO RELAXED?

SHIT.

HUH?

YOU'RE SLOWING DOWN YOUR WHOLE GROUP!

IT'S BECAUSE YOU KEEP BABBLING WHILE YOU RUN. YOU HAVE NO FOCUS.

STOP WEIGHING US DOWN.

I TOLD YOU, YOU DIDN'T BELONG ON THE TEAM.

. . . . . .

AH... SUZUKA!

STEP

UH... YEAH.

SHE'S EXTRA HARD ON YOU, AKITSUKI!

OH, I'M MIKI HASHIBA.

I'M A FRESHMAN.

I HEARD ALL ABOUT YOU FROM SUZUKA.

NOW WE ALL SPLIT UP AND FOCUS ON OUR SPECIALTIES. I'M A SPRINTER, TOO.

COME ON, LET'S GO!

F-FROM ASAHINA? ARE YOU FRIENDS?

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE JUST STARTED.

H- HANG ON...

LET ME REST FOR A SECOND...

ミシ THUMP ミシ THUMP

NOW WHAT?

GET INTO FOUR LINES!

WE'RE GONNA DO FOUR SETS OF 50-METER INTERVALS, WITH FIVE DASHES PER SET.

YES, SIR!

HURRY UP, YOU TWO.

I THINK I CAN HANDLE THAT.

HMM... THAT SOUNDS PRETTY FUN.

WHOOSH

O-OKAY.

HHH

HHH HHH

PICK UP THE PACE, AKITSUKI! WE'RE ONLY HALFWAY THERE!

OKAY, LET'S START ON THE THIRD SET!

THE WHOLE TEAM SPENDS DAY AFTER DAY AT PRACTICE TRYING TO BEAT THEIR RECORD BY AN EXTRA SECOND...OR AN EXTRA CENTIMETER.

THE TRACK TEAM ISN'T ALL FUN AND GAMES, YOU KNOW?

MY STOMACH IS CRAMPING UP...

HAHH

HAHH

WITH ONLY FOUR LINES OF RUNNERS, THERE'S NO TIME TO CATCH MY BREATH.

.....

DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN HANDLE IT, YAMATO-KUN?

ALL RIGHT, NEXT!

FWUMP

HAHH

AFTER ALL THAT RUNNING, SHE CAN STILL CLEAR THE BAR...

WHOA...

FWISH

S-
SORRY!

HEY,
AKITSUKI!
QUIT
SPACING
OUT!

IT'S
FINALLY
OVER.

ペタ
THUMP

PHEW

OKAY,
THAT'S ALL
FOR
TODAY!

SHWEEEET

BLEAH

NICE
WORK,
AKITSUKI-
KUN.
WANNA
GRAB
SOME
LUNCH?

OKAY.
WHY DON'T
YOU DO
YOUR COOL-
DOWN AND
THEN HEAD
HOME.

...NO
THANKS.
I DON'T
THINK I
CAN EAT
RIGHT
NOW.

COOLDOWN= STRETCHING

I CAN'T EVEN MOVE.
PANT
FLOPPA
PANT
COOL-DOWN? YEAH, RIGHT...

I NEVER THOUGHT IT'D BE THIS HARD.
BLECK
MY MOUTH TASTES ALL SOUR, LIKE BLOOD...

I DON'T SEE HOW SHE CAN HANDLE THIS EVERY DAY.

.....!

MAYBE ASAHINA WAS RIGHT. MAYBE I'M NOT CUT OUT FOR THIS.

FWOOSH

WOW, SUZUKA SURE TRAINS HARD.

FWIPPA

HASHIBA...

SH-SHE'S STILL PRACTICING?

A-ASAHINA!

SHE WAS ALWAYS A PERFECTIONIST. SHE NEVER LOST HER COOL, SHE'D JUST GO OUT THERE AND WIN.

...WHENEVER SHE WON, SHE ALWAYS HAD THIS STONE-COLD LOOK ON HER FACE. SHE DIDN'T EVEN CRACK A SMILE.

WE WENT TO DIFFERENT JUNIOR HIGHS, BUT WE USED TO SEE EACH OTHER AT TRACK MEETS.

I HATED HER.

WOULDN'T THAT PISS YOU OFF?

THE REASON SHE NEVER SMILES IS THAT SHE SETS THESE REALLY HIGH GOALS FOR HERSELF...

SHE HASN'T REACHED HER GOAL YET, SO WINNING DOESN'T REALLY MEAN ANYTHING TO HER.

BUT WHEN WE STARTED GOING TO THE SAME SCHOOL, I REALIZED...

UH... YOU DID?

SO NOW...

I'VE GROWN TO REALLY RESPECT SUZUKA.

OH, SO THEY HATE EACH OTHER...

.....

WINNING DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING TO HER?

EVERYBODY RESPECTS HER. EVEN AFTER A HARD DAY OF PRACTICE, SHE STAYS OUT HERE AND TRAINS ALL BY HERSELF.

SHE'S HERE ON A TRACK SCHOLAR-SHIP, SO...

THUMP

THUMP

...SHIT... SHE'S SO COOL.

MAN...

.....

I'M GONNA HANG OUT WITH SUZUKA FOR A WHILE.

WHY DON'T YOU HEAD HOME, AKITSUKI.

. . . . . .

I KEEP TRYING TO GET CLOSER TO HER, BUT...

I CAN'T EVEN MOVE.

YEAH... I'D LOVE TO GO HOME, BUT...

...HUH?

HEY, WE'RE HERE TO PICK UP YAMATO AKITSUKI.

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE WE'RE GROWING FARTHER APART BY THE SECOND.

ARE YOU OKAY, AKITSUKI-KUN?

WHAT'S UP, TRACK BOY?

WHAT'RE YOU GUYS DOING HERE?

YASUNOBU... HONOKA-CHAN...

HEY, MIKI! WILL YOU WATCH THIS JUMP AND SEE IF MY FORM'S OKAY?

AH! I'LL HELP YOU LIFT HIM.

WE FIGURED YOU'D END UP LIKE THIS, SO WE WAITED FOR TYOU.

YOU OWE US ONE.

THANKS.

WELL, TAKE CARE.

. . . . . .

SO, HOW WAS IT?

.....

SHIVER

SHIVER

...IS SO COOL.

ASAHINA...

ARE YOU HER GROUPIE NOW, OR SOMETHING?

GEEZ, MAN...

OOPS.

FWIP

HE'S TOO HEAVY.

OKAY, MAYBE I DID SOUND LIKE A GROUPIE, BUT...

I COULDN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER WAY TO PUT IT.

!

CRASH

OUR NEIGHBOR MR. KOTSUGI WAS VISITING.

HAVE A DRINK!

HEY THERE, MR. MANGA!

I WENT BACK TO MY FAMILY'S HOUSE THE OTHER DAY.

HE WAS ALREADY PRETTY TIPSY.

SUZUKA FOUR-PANEL THEATER NUMBER ELEVEN

MR. KOTSUGI

HEH...

GLUG

GLUG

YOU SHOULD DRAW ME IN ONE OF YOUR MANGA. JUST PUT ME ANYWHERE.

OKAY.

JUST SHOW ME OUT THERE, DOING WHAT I DO!

IN THE WINTER, YOU COULD PUT ME IN A TRACTOR, SHOVELING SNOW.

AND IN THE SUMMER, YOU COULD HAVE ME TRIMMING BRUSH.

I JUST CAN'T IMAGINE A TRACTOR IN A SUZUKA SCENE.

HE PROBABLY WOULD BE A GOOD CHARACTER, BUT...

REALLY, YOU CAN JUST STICK ME IN ANYWHERE.

DON'T YOU THINK I'D MAKE A GOOD CHARACTER?

WOO

WOO

HAHH

HAHH

WHY DO YOU TRY SO HARD, AKITSUKI-KUN?

HE LOOKS EXHAUSTED.

#17 Unrequited Love

SUZUKA

I KNOW, HE'S BEEN RUNNING NONSTOP FOR A WHOLE WEEK NOW.

SHWINK

WOW... DAY AFTER DAY... NEVER MISSING A MOMENT...

HUH? YOU'RE STILL WATCHING THEM PRACTICE, SAKURAI?

HATTORI-KUN...

HUH? M-ME?

NO, I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU.

...THEN AGAIN, YOU'RE SUCH A KLUTZ, YOU'D PROBABLY NEVER EVEN MAKE THE TEAM.

HUH?

EVERY DAY AFTER SCHOOL YOU'RE OUT HERE, STARING OFF INTO SPACE...

IF YOU'RE SO WORRIED ABOUT YAMATO, THEN WHY DON'T YOU JOIN THE TRACK TEAM?

.....

...THEN WHY DON'T YOU JOIN THE TRACK TEAM?

IF YOU'RE SO WORRIED ABOUT YAMATO...

WHAT DOES HE KNOW?

HMMPH

...THEN AGAIN, YOU'RE SUCH A KLUTZ, YOU'D PROBABLY NEVER EVEN MAKE THE TEAM.

STEP

STEP

FWUP

I MEAN, IF I PUT MY MIND TO IT...

FWOOSH

WOO

WOO

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KIDS

FWOOSH

...!

KIDS THESE DAYS SURE ARE FAST.

PANT

HAHH

PANT

WOO

DO YOU THINK WE'LL GET THE RARE CARD TODAY?

WOO

I WIN!

PANT

PANT

CHATTER

CHATTER

ELE-MENTARY SCHOOL... AHHH....

WOW! IT'S FIXED.

YOUR DAD WILL NEVER KNOW.

LISTEN... THIS IS GONNA BE OUR LITTLE SECRET. JUST BETWEEN ME AND YOU, OKAY?

IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT...

WELL...

NOT QUITE...

27-4

EVERY TIME AKITSUKI-KUN CAME TO OUR SHRINE...

I ALWAYS TOLD MYSELF THAT THIS YEAR I'D FINALLY WORK UP THE COURAGE TO TALK TO HIM AGAIN, BUT...

MEOW

GORO-CHAN...

IF I WERE A CAT, I COULD BE AROUND AKITSUKI-KUN ALL THE TIME... JUST LIKE YOU...

OUT FOR A WALK?

YOUR NOSE IS ALL DIRTY.

MEOOOW

...?

AND THINKING ABOUT HOW WONDERFUL THAT WOULD BE...

I USED TO WATCH HIM SITTING THERE, EATING CRO-QUETTES ON THE SHRINE STEPS...

...WISHING THAT SOMEDAY I'D BE SITTING BESIDE HIM.

I'D BE HAPPY TO GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE...

IF YOU WANT?

HUH?

SHOCK

ドキン

SHIVER

ビクッ

EH? SO YOU LIKE YAMATO-KUN, HONOKA-CHAN?

WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO THIS IN THE BATH?

UH... UM...

B L O O D

DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL FIGURE IT OUT SOON ENOUGH.

UH...I REALLY DON'T GET WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

BECAUSE IF YOU WANNA SEE SOMEONE FOR WHO THEY REALLY ARE, YOU'VE GOTTA GET NAKED WITH THEM.

ESPECIALLY WITH GUYS! I MEAN, ONCE YOU SCREW A GUY, YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF PERSON HE IS.

IT'S SORT OF A MASTER AND SERVANT THING.

SO ANYWAY, WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH AKITSUKI-KUN... SAOTOME-SAN?

M-MASTER AND SERVANT?

R-REALLY?

SPLASH

パシャ

WE ALL KIND OF WORRY ABOUT HIM.

I MEAN, HE'S THE KIND OF GUY YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO TAKE CARE OF. HE'S ALWAYS GETTING INTO TROUBLE.

HE SEEMS LIKE THE KIND OF GUY YOU CAN REALLY DEPEND ON.

BUT HE'S SO SWEET...AND SO EASY TO TALK TO...

SHOT DOWN? BY WHO?

HUH?

WHAT?

WHA-?

AH...

OOPS.

HE GETS SHOT DOWN ONCE, AND STARTS LIMPING AROUND LIKE A WOUNDED DEER. WHAT'S DEPENDABLE ABOUT THAT?

UM...

BLOOP

STARE

.....

THE OTHER DAY, HE TOLD SUZUKA-CHAN HE LIKED HER, AND SHE SHOT HIM DOWN.

BUT HE SAYS HE'S STILL IN LOVE WITH HER.

WHAT?

AKITSUKI-KUN... IN LOVE WITH ASAHINA-SAN?

AKITSUKI-KUN LIKES ASAHINA-SAN...

HE WAS, LIKE, "I'LL NEVER GIVE UP!" AND HE JOINED THE TRACK TEAM, BUT...

.....

DON'T YOU WORRY. I'M SURE YOUR DAY WILL COME.

AH.

SPLASH

SPLASH

IT'S NOT MY FAULT.

WELL... SHE WAS GONNA HEAR ABOUT IT SOONER OR LATER ANYWAY.

FWOOSH

HEY, HONOKA-CHAN...

...HE'S BEEN TRYING SO HARD...

SO THAT'S WHY...

I MEAN, I'M NO IDIOT...

NOW I GET IT.

I'LL BE FINE.

ガチャ CLICK

I'M NOT GONNA CRY...I'M NOT!

WRONG DOOR-

AH...HEY, HONOKA-CHAN.

...

HUH?

ポコン

PLUNK

ポコン

PLUNK

BASKE ALL

...

じわぁ…

DRIP

ASAHIYU BATHS
旭湯

I-I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING. I SWEAR THE STEAM COVERED EVERYTHING UP!

SNIFF SNIFF

WAH.

HUH? THEN WHY...

THAT'S NOT WHY I'M CRYING...

...

NO...

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

OH, SHIT...

I'M FINE. I'M FINE. DON'T WORRY. I'M USED TO IT NOW.

N-NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT. I KNOW YOU'RE EXHAUSTED FROM ALL THAT RUNNING, AND—

ガラン FLOP

ガラン FLIP

WELL, I'D BETTER WALK YOU HOME. IT'S PRETTY LATE.

UH, SURE.

THEN DO YOU MIND IF I MAKE A QUICK LITTLE STOP?

AT THE CONVENIENCE STORE?

...OKAY.

HE JOINED THE TEAM BECAUSE OF ASAHINA-SAN...

カサッ
RUSTLE

イリー
マザキ D

HUH? OH...JUST SOME STUFF...

カラン FLOP

カチ FLIP

WHAT DID YOU BUY?

HUH? BUT WE'RE HERE.

IS IT OKAY IF I SIT DOWN?

HERE!

HUH?

カサ
RUSTLE

I REMEMBER YOU SAYING YOU LIKED TO...

EAT THEM HERE.

IT'S A MEAT AND POTATO CRO-QUETTE.

OF COURSE, THAT'S WHY I BOUGHT TWO.

BASKETBALL

EH... Y-YEAH, BUT...CAN I REALLY HAVE IT?

THIS IS REALLY GOOD.

CRUNCH

ちらっ GLANCE

OH! THANKS.

GRIN

I'M SO HAPPY...

VE NTED D THIS R SO NG.

ACTUALLY, I'M TOTALLY STARVING!

BASKETBALL

...FIRST MET.

EVER SINCE THE DAY WE...

BALL

O-OH YEAH...

ズキン

STING

I TRIED TELLING ASAHINA HO GOOD THES WERE, BUT SHE DIDN'T BELIEVE ME.

HIS MIND IS STILL ON ASAHINA-SAN...

I FINALLY GET TO BE ALONE WITH HIM, BUT...

HUH?

HEY!

ササッ

SWIP

BALL

SHE'S MISSING OUT.

I'M THINKING OF JOINING THE TRACK TEAM, TOO!

WELL, I'M NOT GIVING UP EITHER!

WHAT?

YOU ARE?

おし山にはあれど

UM...

WELL, I DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO DO, AND...I JUST WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY.

YEAH... IF I CAN MAKE THE TEAM...

I'M SURE YOU'LL MAKE THE TEAM, BUT... WHY DO YOU WANNA JOIN?

COOL, BUT...IT'S REALLY HARD, YOU KNOW?

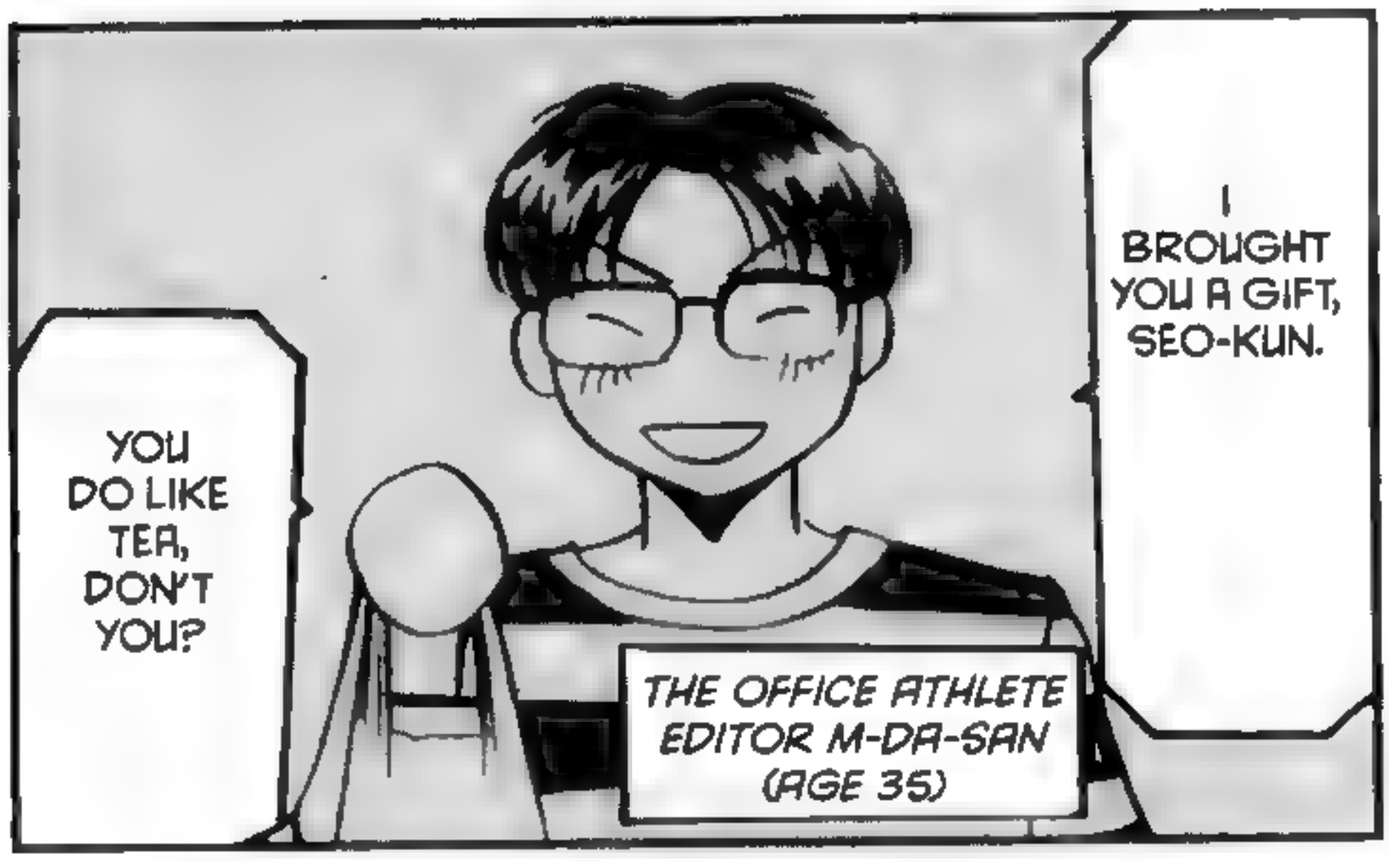
HONOKO-CHAN SURE SEEMS EXCITED ABOUT THIS...

I'LL DO ANYTHING...

DON'T WORRY.

IF IT MEANS...

...BEING CLOSER TO YOU...



SUZUKA FOUR-PANEL THEATER NUMBER TWELVE

SPRING TEA

SUZUKA

#18 Obsession

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU ALL.

もじ JITTER

もじ JITTER

I'M SAKURAI HONOKA. STARTING TODAY, I'LL BE THE NEW TEAM MANAGER.

AWESOME! WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A MANAGER.

WHOA, WHAT A CUTIE!

WAH

I THINK I'D MAKE A GOOD MANAGER.

WELL, I WAS THINKING... I'M REALLY NOT MUCH OF AN ATHLETE, BUT...

AH, AKITSUKI-KUN.

I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE GONNA JOIN THE TEAM AS A MANAGER, HONOKA-CHAN.

BUT BEING A MANAGER IS HARD WORK, TOO, YOU KNOW!

REALLY?

I'LL DO MY BEST!

DON'T WORRY!

...BOYFRIEND AND GIRLFRIEND OR SOMETHING?

ARE THEY...

WHY DON'T YOU QUIT BABBLING, AND...

LOOKS LIKE SHE AND AKITSUKI REALLY GET ALONG.

YEAH.

AH!

WAIT UP, ASAHINA!

...START RUNNING, MIKI.

FWOOSH

FWOOSH

ONE MORE LAP, AKITSUKI! HANG IN THERE.

HHH

HHH

FWOOSH

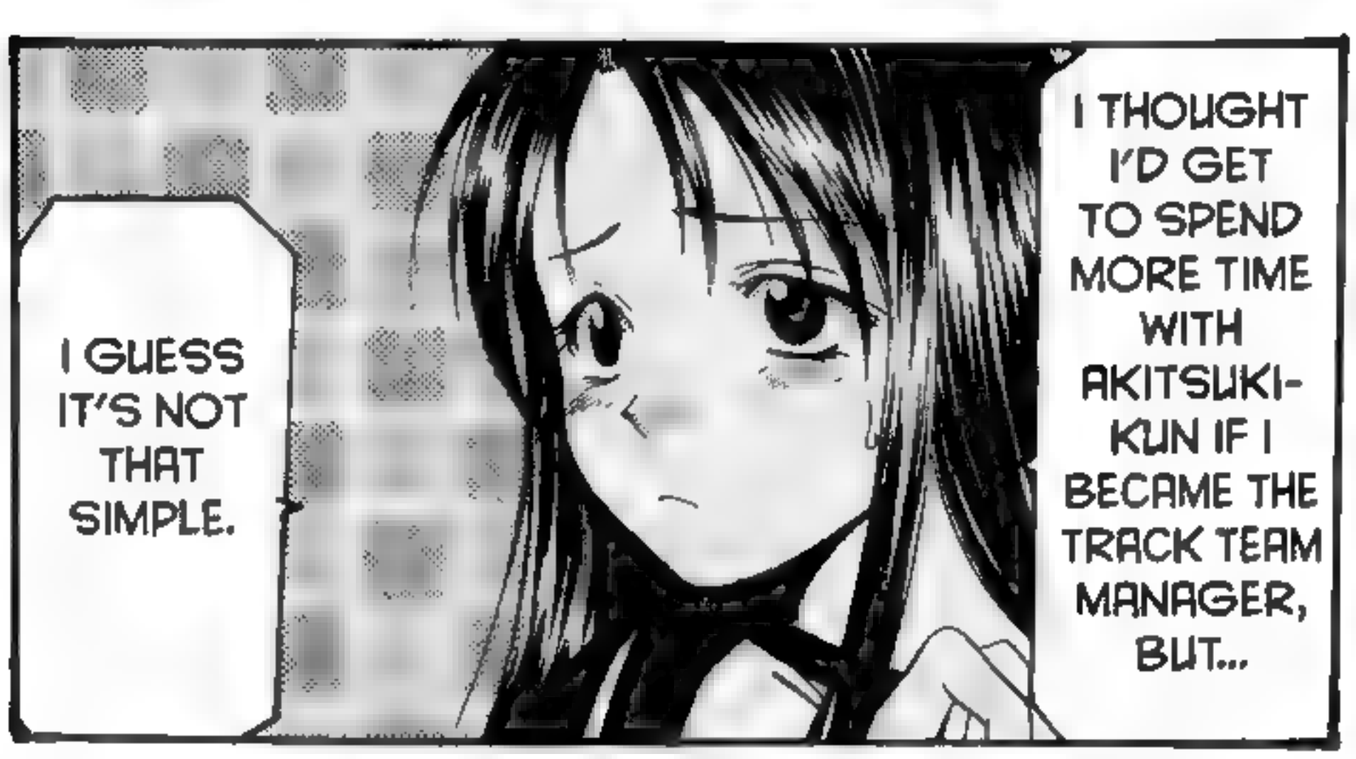
OKAY!

WHOOSH

・・・・・・・・

IT NEVER ENDS.
THERE'S SO MUCH LAUN-DRY.
ゴ
ゴ
SCRUB
SCRUB

EEW! THIS STINKS!
BLEAH


I GUESS IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.
I THOUGHT I'D GET TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH AKITSUKI-KUN IF I BECAME THE TRACK TEAM MANAGER, BUT...

FLAP
FLAP

OKAY, THAT'S IT, GUYS!

PAT

ITO

GOOD WORK, AKITSUKI!

YOU MANAGED TO KEEP UP THIS TIME.

DAMN! I KEEP HOPING IT'LL GET EASIER.

WHAT? HEY, I DIDN'T HIT YOU THAT HARD, DID I?

STOP PICKING ON AKITSUKI.

YOU'RE SO MEAN, HASHIBA.

SHIVER

SHIVER

OUCH.

...ARE YOU OKAY?

...I'M SORRY.

OUCH!

I'LL GIVE YOU A MASSAGE.

EVERYBODY SAYS I'M THE BEST.

もぎゅ

SQUEEZE

YEAH... I'M JUST REALLY SORE.

OH, RIGHT. IT'S ONLY BEEN A WEEK, SO YOUR BODY'S NOT USED TO IT YET.

. . . . . .

HEY, STOP SQUIRM-ING.

THAT'S ENOUGH. JUST LEAVE ME ALONE.

HUH?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

WOULD YOU TWO PLEASE JUST STOP SCREWING AROUND?

WHAT-EVER.

プイッ

HMMPH

WHAT?

I'M NOT SCREWING AROUND.

HURRY IT UP.

AH... OKAY.

HEY, HASHIBA! AKITSUKI! LET'S START THE 200-METER INTERVALS.

GIVE ME A BREAK. I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN...

SHIT! THE LAST THING I WANNA DO IS GET IN A FIGHT WITH ASAHINA...

I MEAN, IF ALL WE'RE GONNA DO IS FIGHT, WHY'D I EVEN BOTHER JOINING?

CLOPPA

CLOPPA

YOU'RE PATHETIC, MIKI.

. . . . . .

WHY ARE YOU BEING SO MEAN TO HIM, SUZUKA?

HE'S REALLY TRYING HARD.

STOP SCREWING AROUND.

YOU'RE LETTING YAMATO-KUN SLOW YOU DOWN.

YOU'VE BEEN ACTING REALLY WEIRD LATELY.

I-I DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM.

ARE YOU SURE?

. . . . . .

...WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM?

EVER SINCE AKITSUKI JOINED THE TEAM, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING LIKE A REAL BITCH...

YOU'RE LIKE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON.

.....

WHY DON'T YOU JUST GIVE THE GUY A BREAK?

CAN'T YOU SEE HOW HARD HE'S TRYING?

LATER.

YEAH, THEN COME BACK OVER HERE AND TIME US.

HUH?

HEY, SAKURAI! WILL YOU REFILL THE POKARI TANK?

THIS ISN'T QUITE...

...WHAT I IMAG-INED.

.....

OKAY.

TAPPA

TAPPA

THEY FINALLY FINISHED!

I'LL GO GIVE AKITSUKI-KUN A TOWEL!

WHAT THE HELL IS HER PROBLEM?

I MEAN, I KNOW SHE WAS AGAINST ME JOINING THE TEAM, BUT...

I'VE REALLY BEEN WORKING HARD.

SHE YELLS AT ME OVER EVERY LITTLE THING. WHAT A BITCH.

WHY DOES SHE HAVE TO BE SO CUTE?

SHIT...

I'M GONNA WORK SO HARD, SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO TALK SHIT TO ME ANYMORE!

WHOOSH

TO HELL WITH THIS! I'M JUST GONNA TRY EVEN HARDER!

AH...I'M READY!

QUIT SPACING OUT, AKITSUKI!

YOU'RE NEXT!

WHY'S HE PISSED AT ME?

WHAT'S HIS PROB-LEM?

WHY DON'T YOU JUST GIVE THE GUY A BREAK?

CAN'T YOU SEE HOW HARD HE'S TRYING?

WHY ARE YOU BEING SO MEAN TO HIM, SUZUKA?

.....

ピク SHOCK

IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE STARTS SLOWING THE WHOLE TEAM DOWN.

S-SURE, HE MIGHT BE TRYING HARD NOW, BUT...

WANNA GET SOME GRUB?

PHEW... WHAT A WORK-OUT!

OKAY, THAT'S IT FOR TODAY! LET'S DO OUR COOL-DOWN, AND THEN HIT THE SHOWERS!

JUST WATCH!

OUCH!

AKITSUKI-KUN!

WHOOSH

HUH?

SHUT UP! I DIDN'T EVEN WANNA DO THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE!

THAT HURTS! DON'T DO IT SO FAST!

HERE'S YOUR TOWEL!

Y-YOU'RE WELCOME.

AH! THANKS, 'SAKURAI!

COMING!

GRR

GET OVER HERE, AND PUSH ON MY BACK, AKITSUKI!

I'LL DO IT!

I AM THE MANAGER, AFTER ALL.

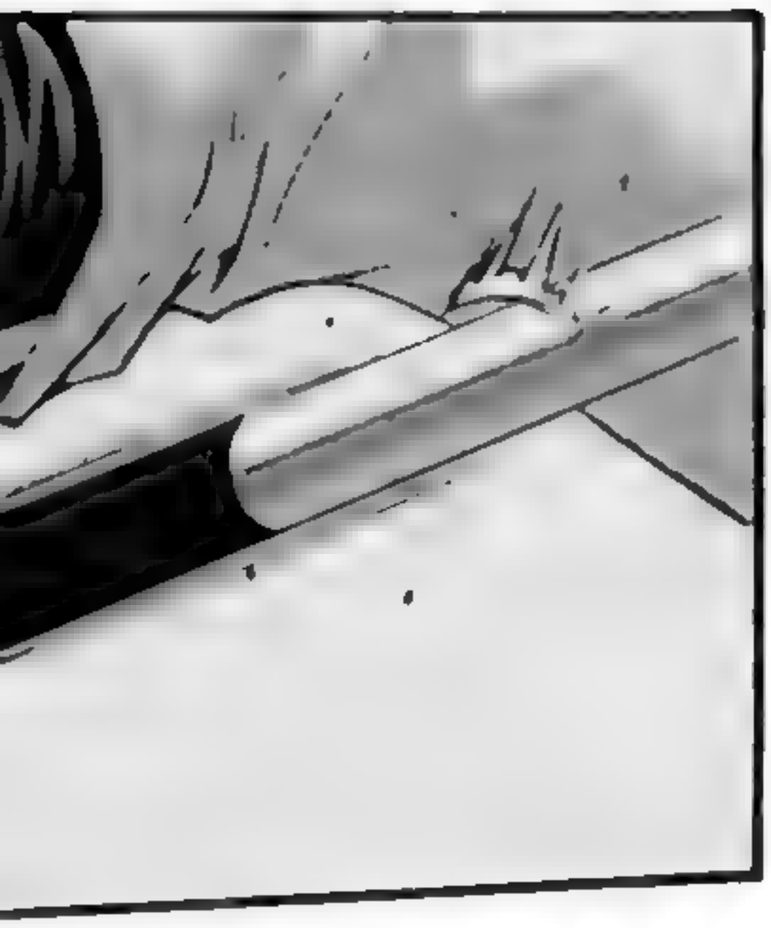
FWIP

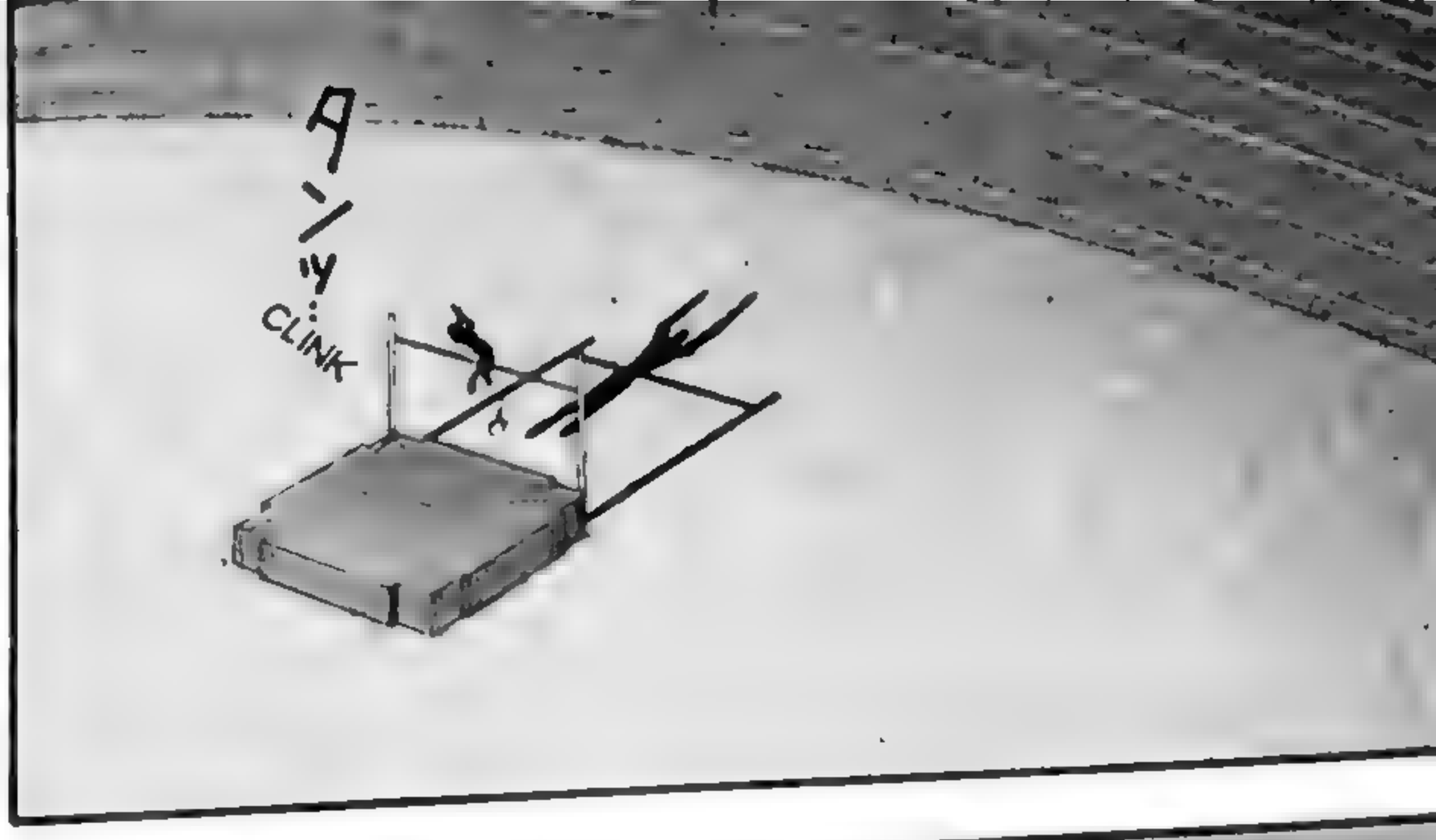
THUD

OUCH!

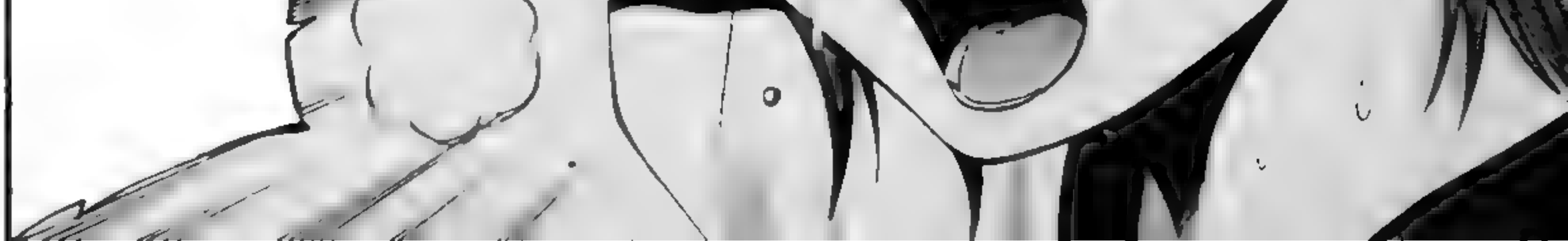
YOU'RE HURT-ING ME.

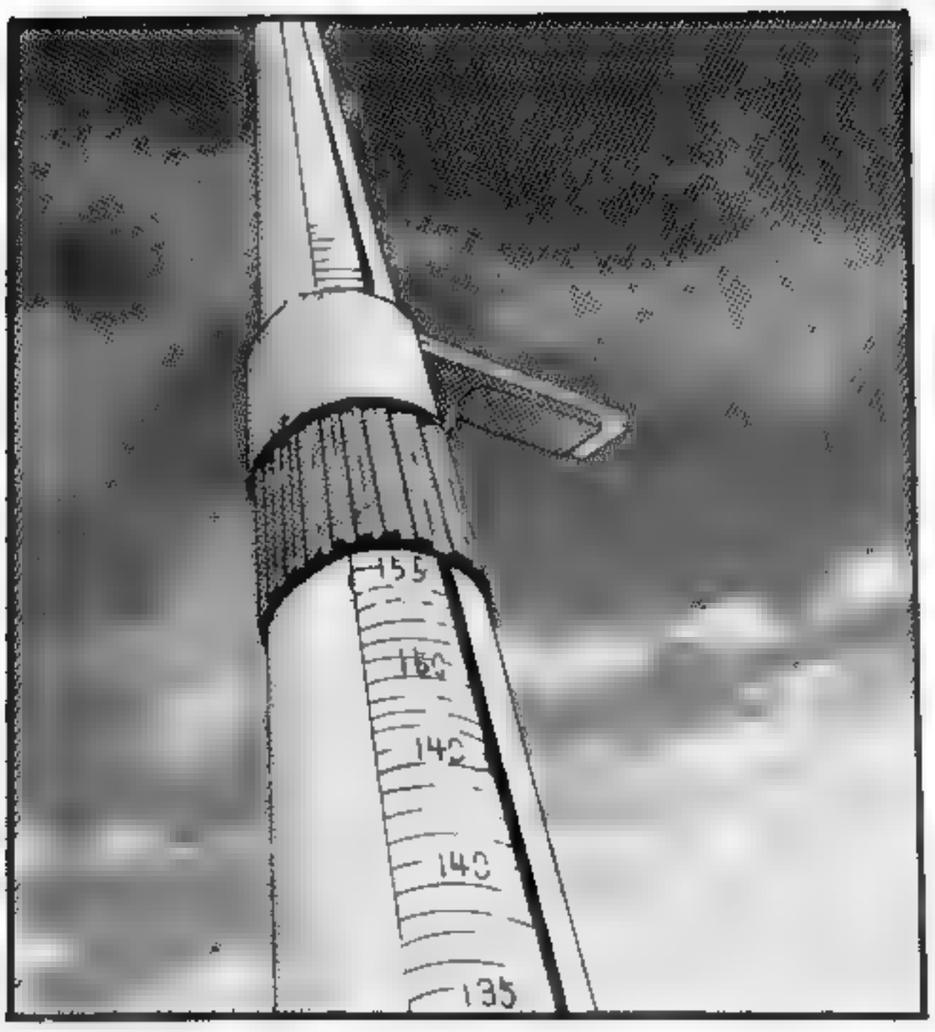
NO PAIN, NO GAIN!




CLINK

FWUMP
FWUMP


DAMN IT!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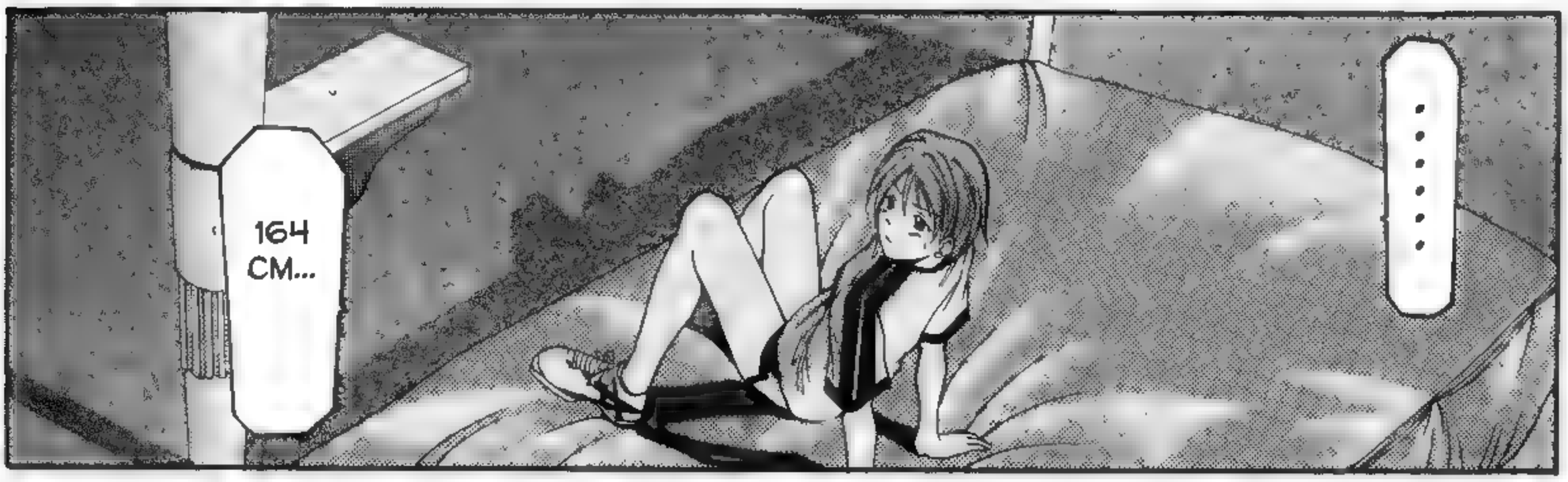
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THEM?
DO THEY HAVE TO FLIRT IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY LIKE THAT?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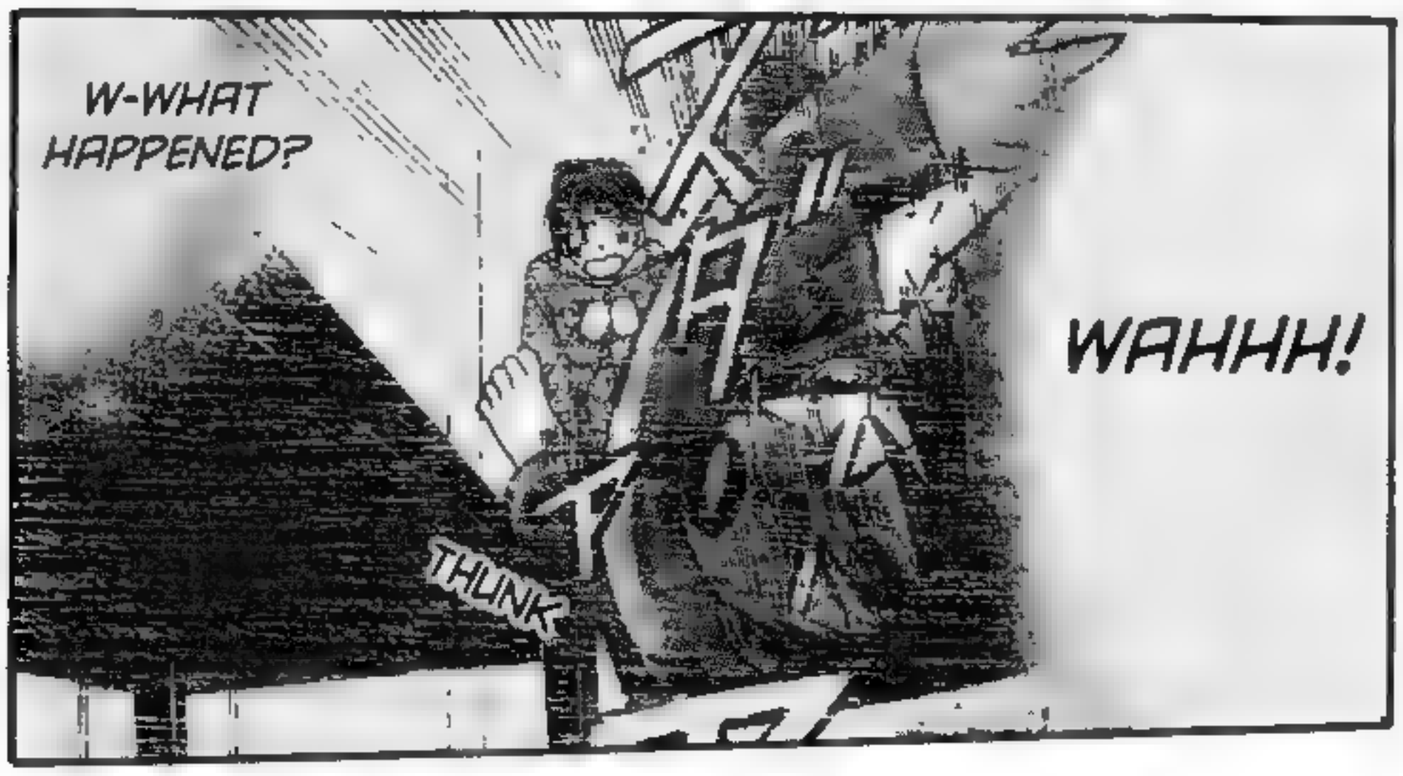

W-WHAT HAPPENED?
THUNK
WAHHH!

NO! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LINE THE TOP OF THE BAR UP AT 164 CENTIMETERS, YOU IDIOT!
WHAT? WELL, HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW?

HUH?
W-WOW! LOOK, YOU CAN SEE THE CITY DOWN BELOW.

...

HEH HEH

WHAT'S HIS...

...DEAL?

CHARACTER PROFILE NO. 5

YUUKA SAOTOME
(COLLEGE FRESHMAN)

DATE OF BIRTH—OCTOBER 10
(LIBRA)
HEIGHT—5'2"
WEIGHT—97 LBS
BLOOD TYPE—B
MEASUREMENTS—31", 22", 33"

LIKES

- BOOZE, RICH GUYS, THAT GUY WHO KEEPS SHOOTING HER DOWN

DISLIKES

- FEMININE GUYS, CHEAP GUYS, SARCASTIC GUYS

PHRASE THAT BEST DESCRIBES HER—GOLD DIGGER

HERE SHE COMES!

コツ
STEP
コツ!
STEP

YEAH.

コツ
STEP
コツ
STEP

GOOD MORNING. YOU ON YOUR WAY TO SCHOOL?

AH.

ガチ
CLICK

O-OH... WELL...

WE COULD WALK TOGETHER?

OR YOU COULD WALK BY YOURSELF.

SUZUKA

#19 Rejection

...RIGHT.

SIGH.

I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN.

WHY DOES SHE HATE ME SO MUCH?

IT'S 'CAUSE I STILL HAVEN'T REALLY PROVEN MYSELF YET.

MAYBE...

ユッ

YANK

THE WHOLE TEAM SPENDS DAY AFTER DAY AT PRACTICE...

...TRYING TO BEAT THEIR RECORD BY AN EXTRA SECOND...OR AN EXTRA CENTIMETER.

HUH?

WOW. YOU'VE ACTUALLY GOT A PRETTY NICE BODY, AKITSUKI.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING WALKING AROUND LIKE THAT? YOU'RE PRACTICALLY NAKED.

H-HASHIBA!

YOU'RE FULL OF SURPRISES.

I-IT IS?

WHAT? THIS IS MY RUNNING OUTFIT.

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO SAY STUFF LIKE THAT?

QUIT TRYING TO EMBARASS ME.

OH, YEAH. I GUESS YOU JOINED RIGHT AFTER THE MEETING.

WHAT'RE YOU...

...SO HAPPY ABOUT ANYWAY?

THAT'S RIGHT!

OH, SO THAT'S WHY THEY TOLD ME TO WEAR MY RUNNING GEAR AND BRING MY SPIKES.

THE TOKYO REGIONAL COMPETITION IS COMING UP IN TWO WEEKS, AND THEY'RE CHOOSING THE COMPETITORS TODAY.

...BUT THE MEN'S SHORT DISTANCE SPRINT IS ABOUT AS COMPETITIVE AS IT GETS.

WHO KNOWS? YOU MIGHT EVEN QUALIFY IF YOUR TIME IS GOOD ENOUGH.

THEY CHOOSE PEOPLE FOR EACH EVENT.

OH...

IF MY TIME IS GOOD ENOUGH...

...

HHHH

HHH

PHEW.

EVERYONE LOOKS SO SERIOUS.

WHOA! I CAN ALMOST FEEL THE TENSION IN THE AIR.

11.39 SECONDS.

P

P

P

FWOOSH

11.88 SECONDS.

THE SENIORS ARE SO FAST.

WELL, PRACTICALLY EVERYBODY'S BREAKING TWELVE SECONDS.

S-SERIOUSLY?

YEAH, THE FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES USUALLY COME IN AROUND ELEVEN SECONDS, TOO.

WHAT'S WRONG, AKITSUKI? YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD.

MIYAMOTO-SEMPAI...

NEXT UP, AKITSUKI AND KOBAYA-KAWA!

...

PAT

GOOD LUCK!

UH...

DON'T WORRY. YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BEAT 'EM.

ESPECIALLY AFTER THE TWO WEEKS YOU JUST SPENT TRAINING.

I'VE JUST GOTTA GET THROUGH THIS WITHOUT PISSING ASAHINA OFF.

FORGET ABOUT MY TIME...

カチャ CLINK

カチャ CLINK

HANG IN THERE, AKITSUKI-KUN!

TH-THANKS.

WHAT?

HUH? AKITSUKI'S GOING FOR A TWO-FOOTED LAUNCH?

HMM...

...

OH YEAH.

HE DID THAT LAST TIME, TOO, AND HE SET A RECORD!

ON YOUR MARKS...

...

OKAY!

FINALLY, A CHANCE FOR REVENGE!

GET SET!

ASAHINA'S WATCHING.

THIS SUCKS.

TRACK SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT KENJI KOBAYAKAWA-KUN

THEY'RE ALL JUST TALKING OUT THEIR ASSES!

BANG

WELL, ANYWAY...

YOU'RE FAST, DUDE.

DON'T WORRY.

YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BEAT 'EM.

THEY THINK...

THEY KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME!

WHOA! AKITSUKI IS FAST!

HOLY SHIT! WHERE'D THEY FIND THAT GUY?

HE—

HE STILL HASN'T PASSED ME.

FWOOSH

SHIT! I'M GETTING TIRED.

100 METERS NEVER FELT SO FAR!

.....!

TAPPA

TAPPA

TAPPA

CAN'T FUCK THIS UP!

ALMOST THERE!

FWOOMP

BEEP

10.98 SECONDS?

T-

HE...

HE'S AMAZING!

HE BROKE ELEVEN SECONDS? SERIOUSLY?

WHAT?

WAHH!

SHIVER

SHIVER

KOBAYAKAWA-KUN CAME IN AT 11.25 SECONDS. A PERSONAL RECORD.

REALLY?

HUH? DID I WIN?

?

CRASH

YOU CAN STOP RUNNING NOW, AKITSUKI.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT HE'D BREAK ELEVEN SECONDS IN HIS FIRST 100-METER DASH?

I HAD NO IDEA HE'D BE THIS GOOD.

CAP-TAIN...

THAT'S QUITE A ROOKIE YOU DISCOVERED, MIYAMOTO.

YEAH...

HE SURE DOES.

DOESN'T AKITSUKI REMIND YOU OF SOMEONE?

WHAT A KLUTZ!

HELP ME!

COME ON, GET UP!

THE MORE HE REMINDS ME OF...

THE MORE I WATCH HIM...

. . .

. . . . . .

HEH, HEH.

ホク ホク

GRIN

パー

SLAM

WOW, AKITSUKI!

YOU DEFINITELY MADE THE CUT.

STEP
STEP
NOW THAT I'VE PROVEN MYSELF...
...MAYBE ASAHINA WILL FINALLY...
AH...
ASAHINA.
...!
H-HEY... TODAY I RAN THE 100-METER DASH IN 10.98 SECONDS.
I REALLY GAVE IT MY ALL!
.....

...OH YEAH?

...HUH?

WHAT'S WITH THAT REACTION?

I SAW YOU.

I-I'M NOT LYING... I REALLY DID—

O-OH...

I KNOW.

SO, THEN WHY...

OH! AND I MADE IT INTO THE TOKYO REGIONALS.

I PROVED MYSELF!

...WELL, GOOD FOR YOU.

.....

WH-WHAT'S UP WITH HER?

.....

WA—

FLICK

AH!

STEP

I'M GOING HOME. BYE.

.....

WAIT!

WHY DON'T YOU LIKE ME?

I DON'T GET YOU AT ALL!

THAT HURTS! LET GO OF ME!

SWIP

AH!

HUH?

THE VERY SIGHT OF YOU JUST PISSES ME OFF!

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS...

I HATE YOU, YAMATO-KUN!

...!!

CHARACTER PROFILE NO. 6

MEGUMI MATSUMOTO
(COLLEGE FRESHMAN)

DATE OF BIRTH—MAY 14 (TAURUS)
HEIGHT—5'2"
WEIGHT—103 LBS
BLOOD TYPE—AB
MEASUREMENTS—36", 23", 34"

LIKES
- BOOZE
- QUIET PLACES
- GUYS WHO CARE ABOUT MORE THAN JUST BOOBS

DISLIKES
- JUMPING AROUND
- NOISY PLACES
- GUYS WHO ONLY CARE ABOUT BOOBS

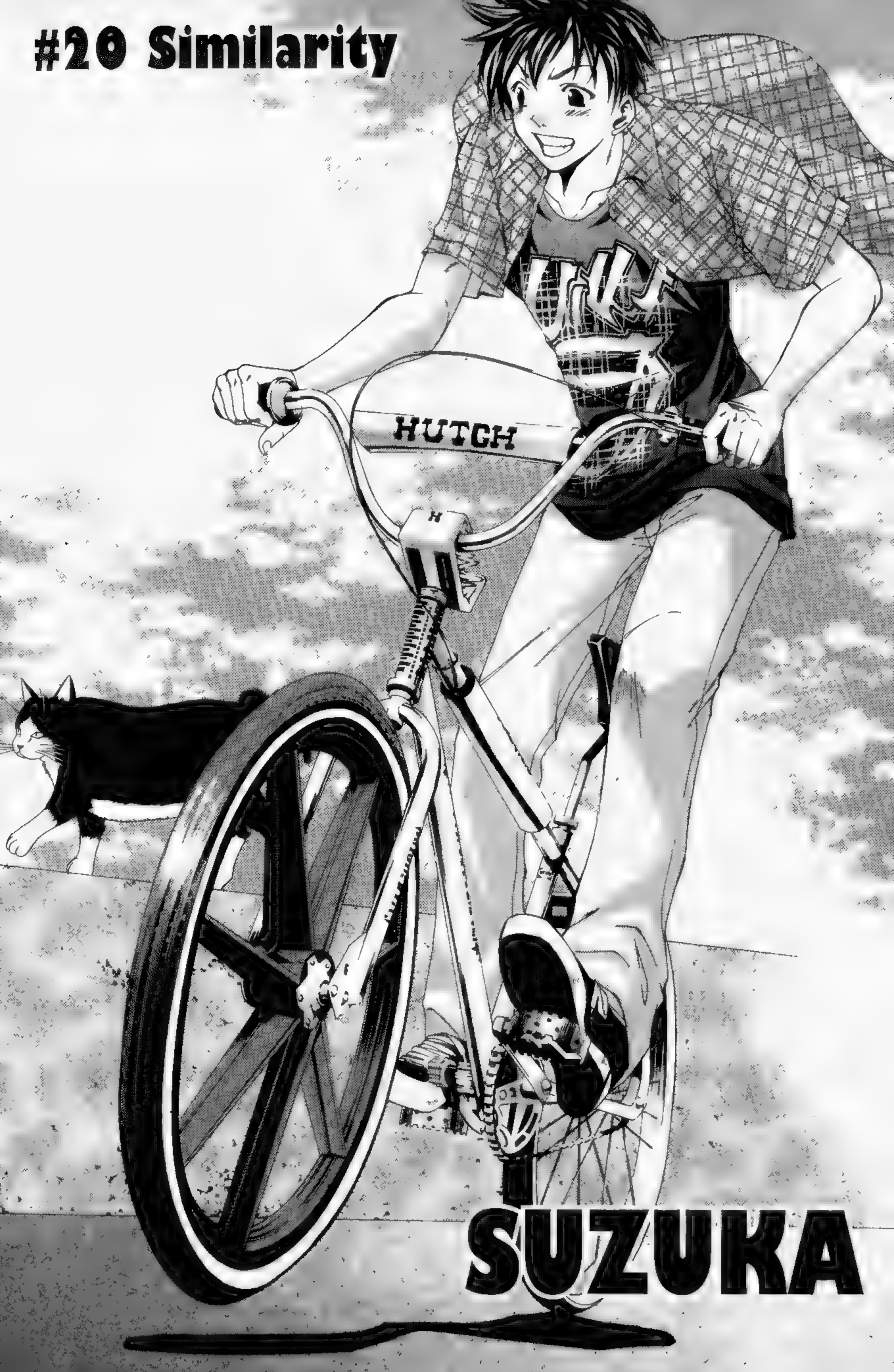
DREAM—TO HAVE SMALLER BOOBS

. . . . . .

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS...

I HATE YOU, YAMATO-KUN!

#20 Similarity



...HATES YOU?

SHE...

SHE HATES ME.

YEP.

THAT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING.

YOU THINK?

BUT... AT LEAST SHE DOES HAVE *SOME* STRONG FEELINGS FOR YOU.

WOW... THAT'S PRETTY HARSH, MAN.

HATE IS A STRONG WORD...

IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER?

SURE. I MEAN I'VE HEARD OF GUYS WHO START OUT STALKING CHICKS AND END UP MARRYING THEM.

DAMN...

HEY, AKITSUKI. YOU'RE HAVING LUNCH, TOO?

UH.... NOTHING.

HASHIBA..

WHY THE LONG FACE? WHAT'S WRONG?

HEY, SHUT UP!

WHAT?

ACTUALLY, HE'S IN LOVE WITH SUZUKA-CHAN, AND SHE JUST TOLD HIM THAT SHE HATES HIS GUTS.

WHAT'VE YOU GOT TO LOSE NOW? YOU MIGHT AS WELL PUT ALL YOUR CARDS ON THE TABLE.

I WAS ACTUALLY KIND OF INTERESTED IN YOU, AKITSUKI-KUN. BUT I GUESS I DON'T HAVE A CHANCE.

OH, SO AKITSUKI LIKES SUZUKA.

EH?

UH... HELLO? I WASN'T EVEN TALKING TO YOU!

YEAH, I DO. I MEAN HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO REACT TO THAT?

YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH WHAT I SAID?

!!

OH GOD! I HATE WHEN CHICKS SAY STUFF LIKE THAT.

HOW ANNOY-ING.

TCH

OH, SORRY... SHE JUST REMINDED ME OF THIS CHICK I KNOW.

AH...

HEY, WHAT'RE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?

YEAH?

I MEAN, YOU JOINED TO GET HER TO LIKE YOU, RIGHT? BUT IT ENDED UP BACKFIRING, SO...

IF SHE REALLY HATES YOU THAT MUCH, THEN THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO STAY ON THE TRACK TEAM.

WELL, ANYWAY.

YEAH, BUT HE DOESN'T EVEN CARE ABOUT TRACK.

SHUT UP, YOU IDIOT!

HE CAN'T QUIT. HE RAN THE 100-METER DASH IN UNDER ELEVEN SECONDS.

WHAT SUZUKA HATES IS WHEN GUYS START SOMETHING AND DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH.

I MEAN, EVEN IF HE BROKE A WORLD'S RECORD, IF SUZUKA-CHAN HATES HIM, IT'D ALL BE MEANINGLESS.

TRUST ME. I'M HER FRIEND, I OUGHTA KNOW.

NO!

YEAH! DON'T LISTEN TO ANYTHING THIS LOSER SAYS.

SHWIP

R-REALLY?

YOU! THAT'S WHO. YOU'RE NOT IN ANY CLUBS. YOU'RE NOT ON ANY TEAMS. YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING.

SWIP

HEY! WHO'RE YOU CALLING A LOSER?

WHY DON'T YOU TRY BUTTONING UP YOUR SHIRT? IS YOUR CHEST HAIR SUPPOSED TO TURN ME ON OR SOMETHING?

'CAUSE I'M HOT, DAMN IT!

I'VE GOT MY OWN STUFF GOING ON!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THE TRACK TEAM LETS YOU GROW YOUR HAIR OUT THAT LONG!

MY FAVORITE PRO RUNNER HAS LONG HAIR JUST LIKE MINE, SO SCREW YOU!

HUH?

I THINK I'LL STAY ON THE TEAM.

I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO DO ANYWAY.

BESIDES, HOW ELSE AM I GONNA GET HER TO LIKE ME?

HEY, WHAT'RE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?

HUH?

Y-YOU MEAN IT?

REALLY?

HEY SAKURAI-SAN...

YEAH.

WHAT?

AH, IT'S NOTHING, FORGET IT.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HER LONG HAIR/HIS UNBUTTONED SHIRT?

. . . . . .

THAT'S RIGHT, MY ONLY HOPE IS TO...

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

HUH?

EH?

ALL RIGHT! THAT'S ENOUGH!

GYM

...GET EVEN FASTER!

HAHH!

CLANK

HEY, CAPTAIN! WILL WORKING OUT LIKE THIS REALLY HELP ME RUN THE 100-METER DASH FASTER?

NO, THANKS.

WOW, AKITSUKI. YOU BENCHED 180 POUNDS.

WANNA GO THROW THE MEDICINE BALL AROUND?

...TO HELP GET YOU UP TO TOP SPEED.

YEAH, IT WILL. FOR A SHORT SPRINT LIKE THE 100-METER DASH, YOU NEED STRONG MUSCLES...

OKAY, BUT DON'T OVERDO IT.

I WON'T!

.....

ALL RIGHT THEN. I'M GONNA STAY BEHIND, AND DO SOME TRAINING ON MY OWN.

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. WE'LL WORK OUT WITH YOU.

I MEAN, I'M YOUR SENPAI, I CAN'T LET YOU WORK OUT ALL BY YOURSELF.

HEY, KOBAYAKAWA! YOU'RE IN EVERYONE'S WAY!

MOVE IT.

I'LL STAY HERE, AND WORK OUT WITH YOU, AKITSUKI.

HUH?

. . . . . .

CAN YOU REALLY LIFT THIS?

CHATTER

CHATTER

PUT ON ANOTHER TEN POUNDS PLEASE, SENPAI.

AKITSUKI'S REALLY INSPIRED THE WHOLE TEAM.

THINGS ARE STARTING TO LOOK UP.

NO PROBLEM.

MIYAMA-MOTO-SENPAI.

. . . . . .

I MEAN, DOESN'T AKITSUKI KIND OF REMIND YOU OF...

...KAZUKI TSUDA?

THIS TAKES ME RIGHT BACK TO JUNIOR HIGH.

ゾク SHIVER

.....

I'M...

...GONNA GO DO SOME MORE TRAINING OUTSIDE.

H-HEY, ASAHINA...

STEP

ユ

UH... OKAY.

CLICK

ガチャ

SLAM

ガラ

FWUP

170

165

CLINK

CLINK

CLINK

WHAT'S WRONG, SUZUKA?

HAHH

HAHH

.....

USUALLY, YOU CAN CLEAR THAT HEIGHT WITHOUT A PROBLEM.

ARE YOU SICK OR SOMETHING?

IT'S NOTHING. I'M FINE.

ARE YOU SURE? THE COMPETITION IS COMING UP, SO YOU'D BETTER PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER.

HEY...

ARE YOU UPSET BECAUSE OF AKITSUKI-

NO...I'M JUST TIRED THAT'S ALL.

O-OKAY.

HUH?

SORRY... I'M GONNA HEAD HOME.

302

SUZUKA ASAHINA

FLUP

旭湯 ASAHIYU BATHS

THUD

FWIP

THIS SUCKS...

I'M SO PISSED.

FWUMP

NOT AT ALL!

...KAZUKI TSUDA?

DOESN'T AKITSUKI REMIND YOU OF...

...

HE'S NOTHING...

...LIKE KAZUKI.

CHARACTER PROFILE NO. 7

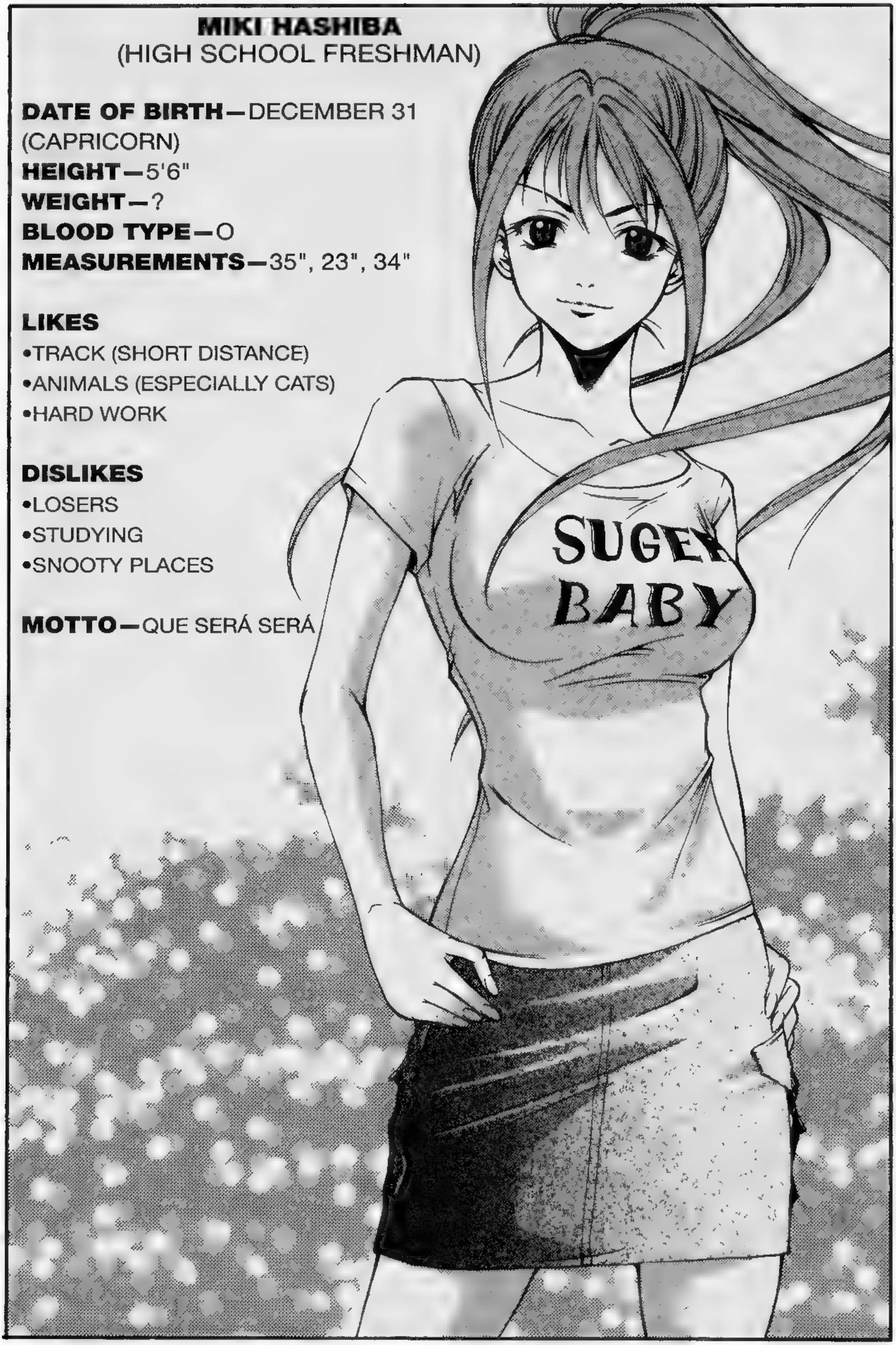
MIKI HASHIBA
(HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN)

DATE OF BIRTH—DECEMBER 31
(CAPRICORN)
HEIGHT—5'6"
WEIGHT—?
BLOOD TYPE—O
MEASUREMENTS—35", 23", 34"

LIKES
- TRACK (SHORT DISTANCE)
- ANIMALS (ESPECIALLY CATS)
- HARD WORK

DISLIKES
- LOSERS
- STUDYING
- SNOOTY PLACES

MOTTO—QUE SERÁ SERÁ



OKAY, THAT'S IT FOR TODAY!

LET'S GO EAT!

WOO! FINALLY!

ALL RIGHT. NO PRACTICE TOMORROW.

I'M GIVING YOU GUYS THE DAY OFF TOMORROW, SO YOU CAN GET READY FOR THE REGIONALS.

I WANT YOU ALL TO REST UP.

THE DAY OFF...

YES, CAPTAIN!

#21 The Photo

SUZUKA

AH.

OH YEAH, RYANO-SAN ASKED ME TO DO SOME SHOPPING FOR HER.

A DAY OFF, I WISH I COULD DO SOMETHING...

...WITH ASAHINA.

SHE WOULDN'T WANNA WASTE HER DAY OFF WITH ME.

I COULD ASK ASAHINA... BUT SHE'D NEVER COME ALONG.

HUH?

YOU'RE GOING HOME?

BUT I GUESS I MIGHT AS WELL ASK HER...

MAYBE SHE'S BORED, TOO.

IT'S ASAHINA AND MIYAMOTO-SENPAI.

OH!

BECAUSE OF KAZUKI?

SINCE WE HAVE SOME TIME OFF, I THOUGHT I'D GO BACK...

...TO YOKOHAMA.

YOKO-HAMA?

...YEAH.

I JUST REALLY WANNA SEE HIM.

KAZUKI?

THUMP

THUMP

WH—

WELL, SAY HI TO HIM FOR ME.

I WILL

ASAHIYU BATHS

WHO'S KAZUKI?

KAZUKI...

MAYBE IT'S...HER OLDER BROTHER...

BUT SHE'S GOING HOME JUST TO SEE HIM.

IT'S GOTTA BE HER BOYFRIEND... OR MAYBE SOME GUY SHE HAS A CRUSH ON.

"ROLL"

EITHER WAY, THAT MEANS...

SHE'S IN LOVE WITH SOMEBODY.

THAT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING.

I'VE NEVER HEARD HER MENTION ANYONE BEFORE, BUT...

I GUESS THAT MEANS SHE JUST WANTS TO SEE HIS FACE.

IF IT'S JUST A CRUSH AND HE DOESN'T LIKE HER BACK...

SO I GUESS SHE'S GOING BACK FOR A DATE.

I JUST REALLY WANNA SEE HIM.

OR...

STING

ｽﾁｬｰ

...YOU'RE JUST GONNA WEIGH THE TEAM DOWN.

IF YOU JOIN UP WITH THAT ATTITUDE...

SORRY...

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS...

I HATE YOU, YAMATO-KUN!

I THOUGHT I COULD TAKE ANYTHING FROM HER, BUT...

I JUST CAN'T HANDLE THE THOUGHT OF ASAHINA OBSESSING OVER SOME OTHER GUY.

ASAHIYU BATHS 朝湯

YEAH, I DON'T KNOW.

WH-WHAT'S WRONG, YAMATO-KUN? JUST LOOK AT THOSE BAGS UNDER YOUR EYES.

I WAS UP ALL NIGHT THINKING ABOUT ASAHINA...I DIDN'T SLEEP A WINK.

SPACED OUT

SURE, HANG ON.

CLOP CLOP

CAN I HAVE SOME TEA, AYANO-SAN?

GOOD MORNING.

SLIDE

AT&I

IS ASAHINA STILL SLEEPING?

HEY..

SO SHE DID GO TO SEE HIM.

OH, OKAY.

YOU'RE NOT GOING OUT TODAY, YAMATO-KUN?

ズゥ SLURP

NO.

I DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO.

SUZUKA-CHAN?

NO, SHE WENT OUT A LITTLE BIT AGO.

SHE SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING TO TAKE CARE OF BACK HOME.

コト

CLINK

PURR
PURR
PURR

FWUFF

MEOW? WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
YOU FAT, OLD CAT!

HEY, WHERE'RE YOU GOING? TO THE BATHROOM?

CLOP
CLOP

WAH!

STUPID CAT! DON'T GO INTO ASAHINA'S ROOM!

CLANK!

SCHWICK

MEOW

FWICK

ASAHINA'S...

...PROBABLY ALREADY IN YOKOHAMA BY NOW, GORO-CHAN.

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?

FWUMP

IF ASAHINA SAW ME IN HERE...

HEY, COME BACK HERE! THIS IS BREAKING AND ENTERING... EVEN IF YOU ARE JUST A CAT.

CLOP

CLOP

MEOW

HUH?

1

BECAUSE OF KAZUKI?

OH!

THUMP THUMP

ドクン！

I JUST REALLY WANNA SEE HIM.

...YEAH.

ドクン！

THUMP THUMP

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...

THIS MUST BE HIM.

IS THAT...

……！

THIS IS THE GUY THAT ASAHINA IS IN LOVE WITH.

HAHH

HAHH

SUZUKA-CHAN'S FAMILY'S HOUSE?

WELL, I DO HAVE HER ADDRESS WRITTEN DOWN.

OOPS, SORRY!

KYAA

BONK

AT&I

I DON'T KNOW!

WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO AT SUZUKA-CHAN'S, YAMATO-KUN?

...WHAT I'LL SAY TO HER!

ゴ" ゴトン CLACK

ゴトン CLACK

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'LL DO WHEN I SEE ASAHINA, OR...

Daiei

2F

5D

HD

BUT...

I JUST HAVE TO GO SEE HER!

のりば

OKAY, I CAME HERE ON A WHIM...

WAH, IT'S SO HOT!

NOW I'VE GOT TO FIGURE OUT JUST WHAT THE HELL I'M GONNA DO.

AT&I

WHAT-EVER...

I'LL JUST THINK IT OVER WHILE I WALK.

ASAHINA

...

AT&T

WHAT'S WITH THIS HOUSE?

I-IS SHE RICH OR SOMETHING?

MAN... WHY AM I SO NERVOUS? I FEEL LIKE MY HEART'S GONNA JUMP RIGHT OUT OF MY CHEST.

I MEAN, HERE I AM... IN FRONT OF ASAHINA'S HOUSE.

I WONDER IF SHE'S HOME.

ドク ドク

GULP

ピタッ

PAUSE

コツ

STEP

I'M SUCH A LOSER!

WAIT... I HAVEN'T EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT I'LL SAY WHEN SHE COMES TO THE DOOR.

OH MY GOD...I REALLY AM TURNING INTO A STALKER...

HUH?

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

WH-WHO'S SHE?

CAN I HELP YOU WITH SOMETHING?

CHARACTER PROFILE NO. 8

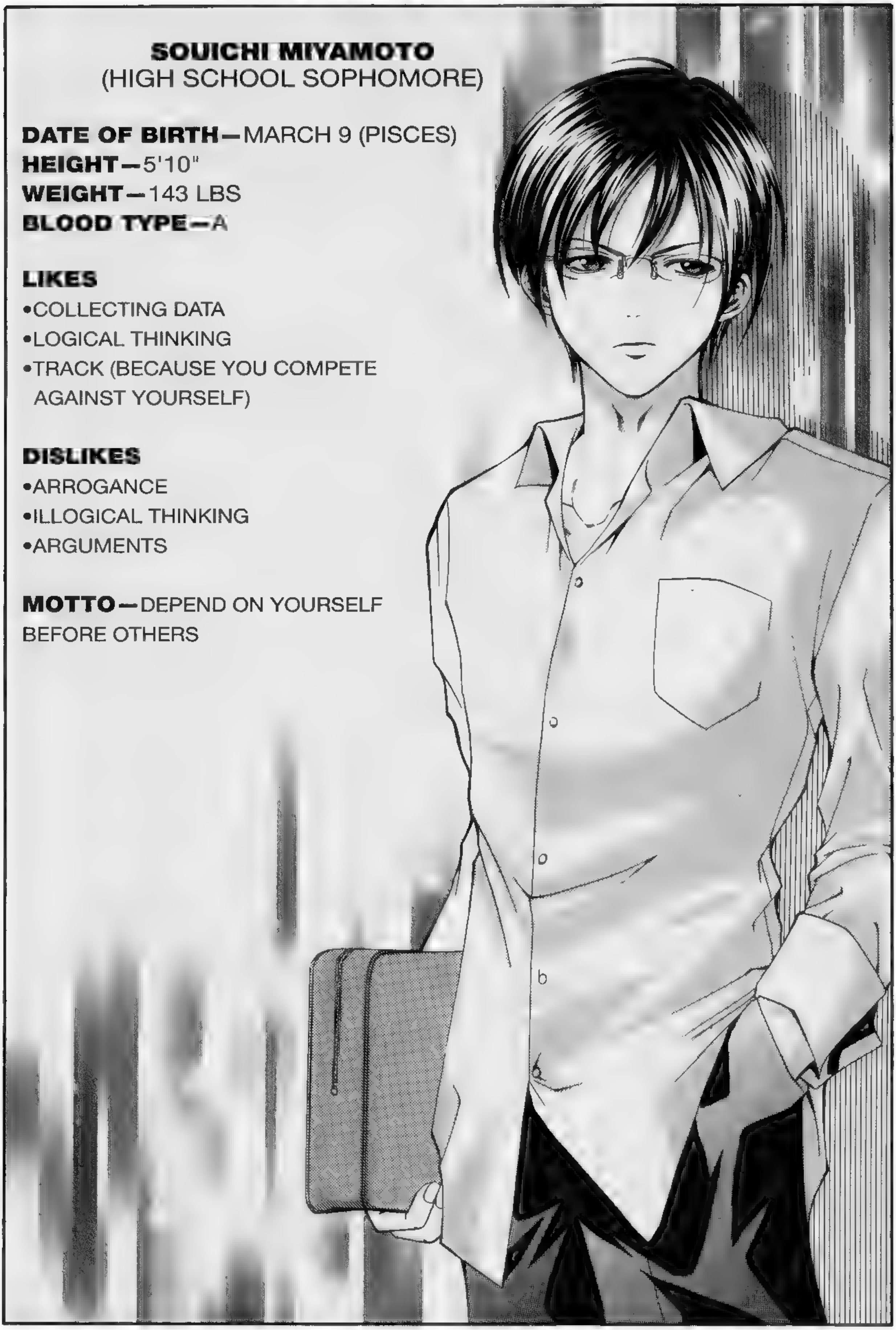
SOUICHI MIYAMOTO
(HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE)

DATE OF BIRTH—MARCH 9 (PISCES)
HEIGHT—5'10"
WEIGHT—143 LBS
BLOOD TYPE—A

LIKES
- COLLECTING DATA
- LOGICAL THINKING
- TRACK (BECAUSE YOU COMPETE AGAINST YOURSELF)

DISLIKES
- ARROGANCE
- ILLOGICAL THINKING
- ARGUMENTS

MOTTO—DEPEND ON YOURSELF BEFORE OTHERS



I SAID...

...CAN I HELP YOU WITH SOMETHING?

UH...

UM...I...

#22 Rivals in Love

SUZUKA

SO? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

.....

I-I LIVE NEXT DOOR TO SUZUKA-SAN..

UH...I'M A FRIEND OF HERS!

OF SUZU-KA'S...?

UH... WELL...I WAS JUST PASSING BY SO I THOUGHT I'D STOP BY FOR A CHAT.

ARE YOU REALLY SUZUKA'S FRIEND?

SOUNDS LIKE A LOAD OF CRAP OF ME!

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

UH... YEAH...

OH...

I'M YAMATO AKITSUKI.

AKITSUKI?

SHE SURE IS SUSPICIOUS.

ARE YOU....

ちら GLANCE

DID YOU JUST MAKE THAT UP?

カラ SLIDE

カ SLIDE

WELL, I'VE NEVER HEARD OF YOU.

N—

NO, I'M NOT!

ガーン SHOCK

...STALKING SUZUKA OR SOMETHING?

WAAAHH!

#!+?!

GRAWL

GET HIM, MUKU!

ピク PWIP

.....

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU...

IS THAT SO?

R-REALLY! I WAS JUST PASSING BY, THAT'S ALL!

GYAA!

CHOMP

BITE HIS ACHILLES TENDON, SO HE CAN'T RUN AWAY.

GYAA!

CHOMP

CHOMP

FWUMP

BITE HIM IN THE HEAD, MUKU!

...IN LOVE WITH SUZUKA, AREN'T YOU?

YOU'RE...

.....

R-REALLY...

HAHH

I JUST WANTED TO TALK TO...

HAHH

SHE'S EVEN WORSE THAN YUUKA-SAN.

WELL, ARE YOU?

GLARE

PAT

H-HUH?

I HEARD SHE WAS COMING HOME TO SEE SOME GUY NAMED KAZUKI.

I-I'M JUST A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT HER, THAT'S ALL.

KAZUKI?

OH I GET IT.

YOU COULDN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF SUZUKA SEEING ANOTHER GUY, SO YOU CAME CHASING AFTER HER.

.....

BLUSH

.....

AT&I

IF SHE REALLY DID COME HOME, THEN SHE'S PROBABLY OVER AT KAZUKI'S RIGHT NOW.

YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE TOO BAD A GUY, SO I'LL TAKE YOU OVER THERE.

NEVER MIND. I'LL JUST GO HOME...

FOLLOW ME.

HUH?

UH...

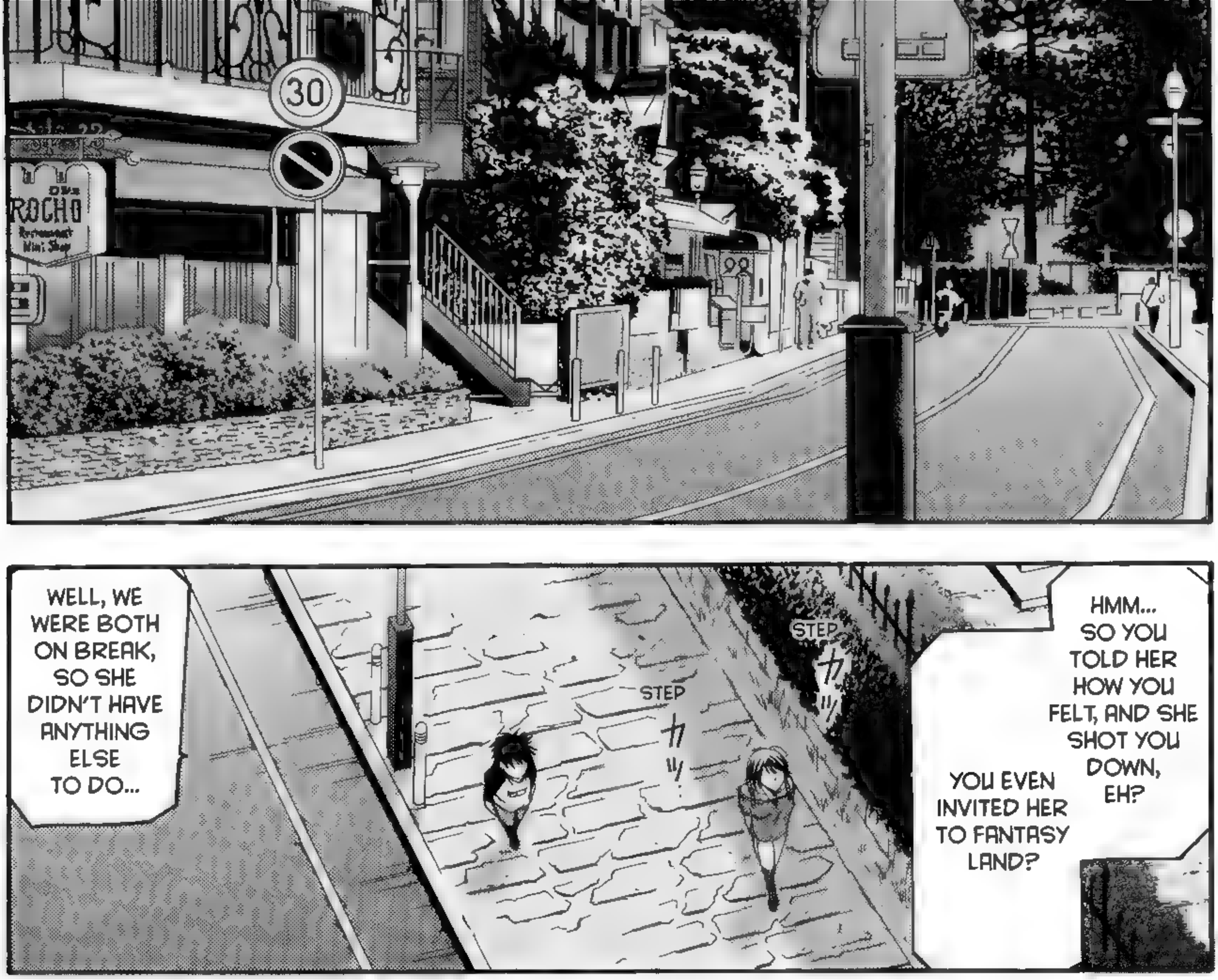
BUT...

A&T

Y-YEAH.

OH, I'M SUZUNE ASAHINA, BY THE WAY. I'M SUZUKA'S OLDER SISTER.

NICE TO MEET YOU.


30
ROCHO
Restaurant
Mini Shop

WELL, WE WERE BOTH ON BREAK, SO SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO DO...
STEP
STEP
HMM... SO YOU TOLD HER HOW YOU FELT, AND SHE SHOT YOU DOWN, EH?
YOU EVEN INVITED HER TO FANTASY LAND?

.....
WHAT IS UP WITH THIS CHICK?

WELL... OKAY.
I CAN SEE THAT YOU REALLY DO CARE ABOUT SUZUKA.

AND EVEN THOUGH YOU GOT SHOT DOWN, YOU'RE NOT GIVING UP?
UH...
NOPE.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO SUZUKA.

WHAT DOES SHE EXPECT ME TO DO WHEN SHE BRINGS ME TO THIS GUY'S HOUSE?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?

ASAHINA'S JUST GONNA END UP HATING ME EVEN MORE.

HUH?

HERE WE ARE.

SUZUKA'S IN THERE.

GOING TO SEE HER ISN'T GONNA HELP ANYTHING...

Y-YOU KNOW... I THINK I'LL JUST GO HOME...

WHA—?

. . . . . !

森田家之墓

IT'S BEEN ABOUT TWO YEARS... EVERY TIME SHE HAS A DAY OFF, SHE COMES HERE TO PRAY.

……

AT&I

HE DIED IN AN ACCIDENT.

TSSSP

WAIT, SO...

YOU MEAN KAZUKI IS...

.....

HE WAS ON THE WAY TO THE FINAL COMPETITION FOR HIS JUNIOR HIGH TRACK TEAM.

KAZUKI T'SUDA

...YEAH.

I JUST REALLY WANNA SEE HIM.

SO THE GUY ASAHINA CAME ALL THIS WAY TO SEE...

...IS....

A TRUCKER FELL ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL, AND RAN A RED LIGHT.

ス

!!

SWIP

THIS MIGHT SOUND WEIRD, BUT...

...AND MORE MATURE...

...THAN EVER.

FOR SOME REASON, THAT DAY ASAHINA LOOKED MORE BEAUTIFUL...

KAZUKI WAS A GRADE AHEAD OF SUZUKA. HE WAS THE STAR OF THE TRACK TEAM.

SUZUKA REALLY LOOKED UP TO HIM.

SHE MUST STILL HAVE...

...FEELINGS FOR HIM...

.....

100-METER DASH?

TWO-FOOTED LAUNCH?

HE HAD THE REGIONAL RECORD FOR THE 100-METER DASH.

HE WAS FAMOUS FOR HIS TWO-FOOTED LAUNCH.

KAZUKI MIZUDA

HE WAS A REAL KLUTZ.

WELL...HE WAS FAMOUS FOR TRACK, BUT WHEN HE WASN'T ON THE FIELD...

.....!

YEP...

WELL, IT WAS GOOD TO MEET YOU...

YOU'RE DEFINITELY ASAHINA'S TYPE.

EVERYBODY WHO KNEW KAZUKI TSUDA MUST THINK I'M JUST LIKE HIM.

DO WE REALLY LOOK THAT MUCH ALIKE?

HE LOOKED A LOT LIKE YOU.

SO ANYWAY, SUZUKA'S PROBABLY JUST...

I'M GOING HOME.

DON'T TELL HER I WAS HERE.

STEP

HEY, WAIT!

AH...

AT &

ゴソゴソ CLICK

ゴソゴソ CLACK

ゴソゴソ CLICK

ゴソゴソ CLACK

……

WELL, ANYWAY... YOU'RE FAST, DUDE.

AND, WHEN SUZUKA-CHAN SAW YOU RUN LIKE THAT, SHE TOOK NOTICE.

YAMATO-KUN...

...SURE IS FAST.

SHE DID NOT.

ガシ GRIP

SHE WASN'T...

...WATCHING ME.

...REMEMBERING KAZUKI.

SHE WAS JUST...

HOW COULD I BE SO STUPID?

KAZUKI TSUDA

...THAT I MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE...

AND THERE I WAS THINKING THAT SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY LIKE ME...

WHY DO YOU KEEP COMING BACK HERE?

SUZUKA...

SUZUNE...

.....

HYUU

...BUT I—

HE'S DEAD, SUZUKA, AND THINKING ABOUT HIM ALL THE TIME...

...ISN'T GONNA BRING HIM BACK.

I-I DIDN'T?

I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER.

...BUT

I NOTICED YOU DIDN'T COME BACK HOME ON YOUR LAST BREAK, SUZUKA. WHAT HAPPENED?

.....

WAIT... SUZUKA.

STEP

LET'S GO HOME, SUZUNE.

...SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO DO ANYWAY...

WELL, WE WERE BOTH ON BREAK, SO...

YAMATO AKITSUKI, EH?

HYUU

HE JUST MIGHT HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO...

...SAVE POOR SUZUKA...

CONTINUED IN VOLUME 4

Translation Notes

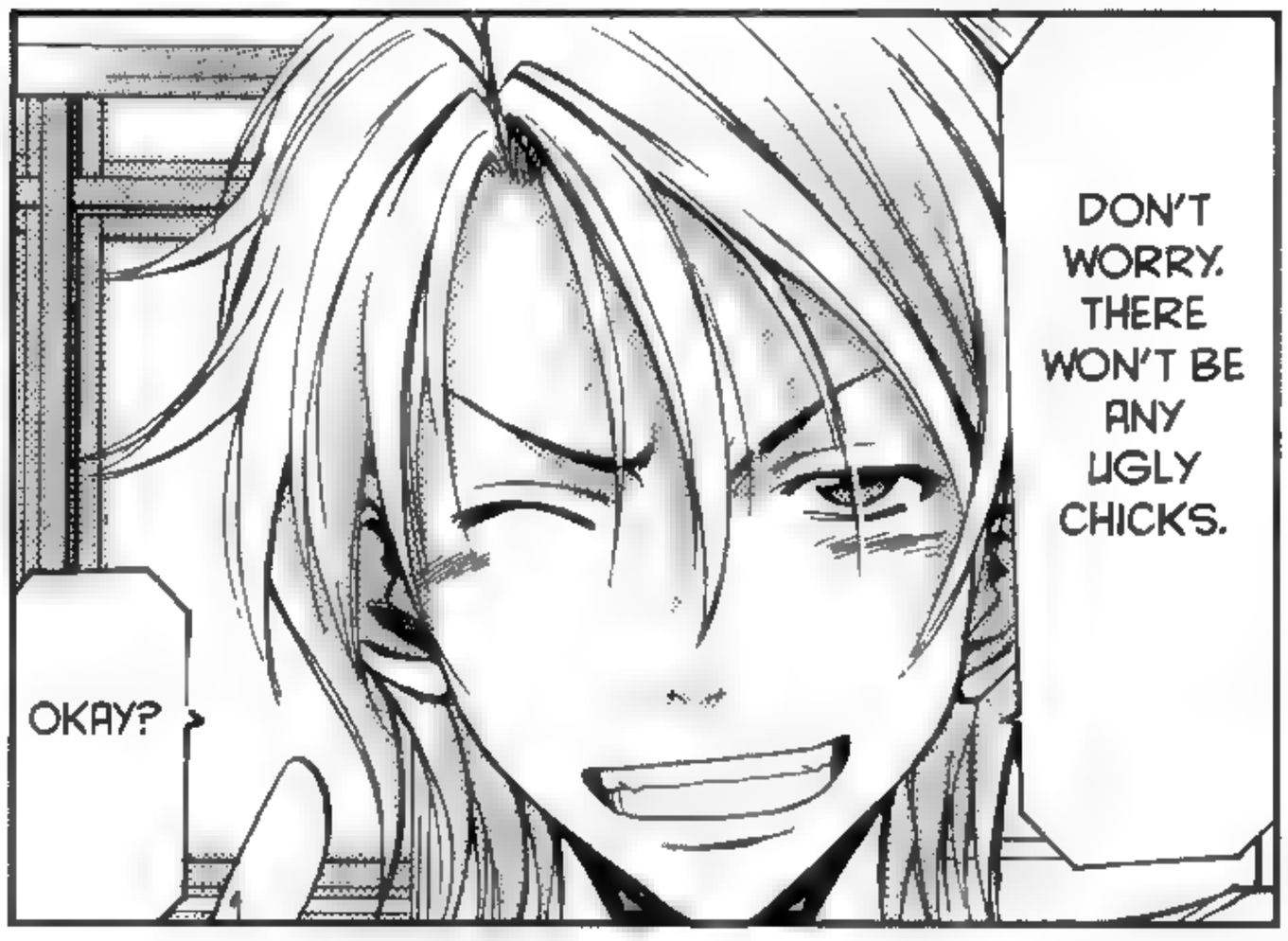
Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more an art than a science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction in our translation or where a Japanese cultural reference is used.

Hiroshima Carp, page iv

The Hiroshima Carp are a Japanese baseball team.

Gokon, page 10

A *gokon* is a Japanese dating ritual in which an even number of guys and girls go out together on a date. It's like a Japanese version of speed dating.



"It might be awful," page 92

In America, it might sound weird to say such terrible things about a present you're giving someone, but this is the norm in Japanese culture. When presenting a gift, Japanese people tend to show their humility by belittling the quality of the gift. The most common phrase for doing this is "*tsumaranai mono desu ga,*" which means something like "It's nothing special, but..." Of course, in this case, the tea really did turn out to be "nothing special."

Manager of the team, page 94

Japanese school sports clubs tend to have managers, who handle various chores, such as providing drinks, handling towels, and doing first aid. Managers are almost always girls. Oftentimes, girls join hoping to meet and hook up with cute, athletic guys.

Pokari, page 103

Pokari Sweat is a popular Japanese sports drink.

Yokohama, page 156

Yokohama is Japan's second-largest city. It's about thirty minutes by train from Tokyo.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Everything was going just fine between Yamato and his gorgeous neighbor Suzuka . . . until Yamato opened his big mouth and said the three most dangerous words a guy can utter: "I love you." Now Suzuka is giving him the silent treatment. In a desperate bid to get back on her good side, Yamato joins the track team. Far from being pleased, Suzuka is furious, believing Yamato will bring the *real* athletes down. Yet Yamato surprises her—and himself!—when he turns out to be a worthy contender. Now he's headed for victory at the track. But will he ever win the only prize he really wants: Suzuka's love?

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